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ABSTRACT

Nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) working in education in India are professional resource centers and innovators able to reach children who are educationally disadvantaged. The Indian government could improve the effectiveness of primary education by increasing its collaboration with NGOs. India has an arduous task ahead to provide good quality schooling to all 6-14 year olds. India's elementary education system is already one of the largest in the world, but despite this, 35 million children are outside schools and an equal number do not complete even five years of schooling. This report examines the importance of government-NGO partnerships to hasten universal primary education and to enrich its quality. The report presents case studies of six NGOs working in different spheres of elementary education and explores the paths they have taken to scale up and replicate their models in the government system. It brings forth the NGO sector's concerns and perspectives on the state of primary education in India. The report's data from the case studies rest on the feedback, information, and perspectives shared by the NGOs; the data reaffirm critical areas for action from the perspective of the NGOs surveyed. (Contains 26 notes, 9 text boxes, a glossary of acronyms, and a 108-item bibliography.) (BT)

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# THE ROLE OF NONGOVERNMENTAL ORGANIZATIONS IN PRIMARY EDUCATION

## A Study of Six NGOs in India

World Bank Working Paper No. 2530

SHANTI JAGANNATHAN

SO 032 645

J. Feather

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## PREFACE

India has an arduous task ahead to provide good quality schooling to all six to fourteen year olds. It is a task of enormous proportions in every way. India's elementary education system is already one of the largest in the world - 150 m children enrolled in nearly 800 thousand schools that provide primary education within 1 km to children in 95% of the country. Despite this, 35-m children are outside schools and an equal number do not complete even 5 years of schooling. The cost estimates for universalizing elementary education in India range from an incremental investment of Rs 40,000 crores to Rs 1 30,000 crores over a ten-year period. The imperative for concerted action by the Government is well recognized. However, the task of ensuring basic education and literacy to every child, youth and adult also requires the voluntary and private sectors as well as communities to collaborate and contribute. Successful experiments and new approaches to education have emerged from Non-government organizations (NGOs). The education system not only needs to 'let a thousand flowers bloom' but also to imbibe lessons from NGO activities to improve the quality of education at large.

The report examines the importance of GO-NGO partnerships to hasten universal primary education and to enrich its quality. It presents case studies of 6 NGOs working in different spheres of elementary education and explores the path they have taken to scale up and replicate their models in the Government system. It brings forth the NGO sector's concerns and perspectives on the state of primary education in the country. The study reaffirms critical areas for action from the perspective of the NGOs surveyed. The Robert McNamara Fellowship awarded in 1997 funded this study. Most of the fieldwork was carried out in 1998 and the information was updated end of 1999 and early 2000.

The study rests entirely on the feedback, information and perspectives shared by the NGOs. I am indeed grateful to representatives of the NGOs surveyed for giving so freely of their time for discussions and field visits. I extend my thanks to Mrs. Shantha Sinha and Venkat Reddy (MV Foundation), Madhav Chavan, Madhukar, Deepak Dhopat, Mushira, and Meera (Pratham), Anjali Naronha and Ghanshyam Tiwari (Eklavya), Mr. Yogendra, Kumud and Sushmita Banerji (Bodh Shiksha Samiti), Mr. Padmanabha Rao, Rama Rao, Mr. Shailendran and Mr. and Mrs. Herzberger (Rishi Valley) and Jayshree Oza (CEMD), many of whom read and commented on the report. I appreciated my discussions with Sonali Kumar, Dhir Jhingran, Amarjeet Sinha, Amita Sharma and Mr. Gopalakrishnan. I also gained useful insights from Dr Vaidyanatha Ayyar, Mrs. Sharda Jain, Neera Burra, Sarat Babu Vasireddy, Venita Kaul, Mervi Karikorpi, Adriaan Verspoor, Jean Dreze, Dr Govinda, Divya Lata and Mr. Anil Bordia. I am grateful to Anu and Vikram Roy, Prema Clarke, Vinod Raina, Prof. Daswani and Geeta Nambissan for their comments on the report. I am grateful to the European Commission for allowing me the opportunity to work on this study. The McNamara Fellowships office was responsible for valuable exchanges and discussions with researchers working in similar areas in other parts of the world. I am particularly grateful to Shobha Kumar.

All errors and omissions are of course my own.

New Delhi

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## GLOSSARY

| | |
|---|---|
| AS | Alternative School |
| BKVV | Baala Kaarmika Vimochana Vedika |
| BRC | Block Resource Centre |
| CEMD | Centre for Education Management and Development |
| CIE | Central Institute of Education |
| CRC | Cluster Resource Centre |
| DIET | District Institute of Education and Training |
| DPEP | District Primary Education Program |
| ECCE | Early Childhood and Education Program |
| EFA | Education For All |
| EGS | Education Guarantee Scheme |
| ELP | Education Leadership Program |
| EMRP | Education Management Resource Program |
| GER | Gross Enrolment Ratio |
| ICDS | Integrated Child Development Services |
| MG | Multi-grade |
| ML | Multi-level |
| MLL | Minimum Levels of Learning |
| MVF | M. Venkatarangaiya Foundation |
| NCERT | National Council for Education Research and Training |
| NCLEP | National Child Labour Eradication Program |
| NER | Net Enrolment Ratio |
| NFE | Non Formal Education |
| NGO | Non Governmental Organization |
| PRI | Panchayati Raj Institutions |
| PTA | Parent Teacher Association |
| RV | Rishi Valley |
| RVREC | Rishi Valley Rural Education Centre |
| SCERT | State Council for Education Research and Training |
| SIEMAT | State Institute of Education Management and Training |
| SMC | School Management Committee |
| TPR | Teacher Pupil Ratio |
| UEE | Universal Elementary Education |
| UPE | Universal Primary Education |
| VEC | Village Education Committee |

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

India has not been able to fulfil its constitutional pledge for providing free and compulsory education for all children upto the age of 14, nearly 5 decades after it was made. India is still grappling with serious problems of inadequate access, quality and inefficiency in the schooling system. This study argues that sustainable and enduring partnerships with the voluntary sector will strengthen the Government's efforts to actualize the goal of universal elementary education (UEE). The current climate for nation-wide reform and development in elementary education makes it an opportune time for the Government to forge strategic alliances with the voluntary sector. This study calls for a sharing of the vision for UEE between the Government and the NGOs whereby the Government recognizes the role of NGOs as innovators and professional resource centres and builds a culture of collaboration and partnership, and the NGOs, in turn, acquire a larger, macro perspective.

The study documents six innovative NGO initiatives to enhance access to primary education for disadvantaged children and to increase the quality of schooling in India. These NGOs have demonstrated effective grassroots action to enhance the quality of basic education and have also influenced mainstream education through replication of their models and through policy dialogue with the Government. While NGOs are best associated with small projects and micro-level interventions, the study postulates a growing and strategic role for the NGOs to support and enrich education programs of a national dimension and to collaborate with the Government in a macro setting. The study attempts to identify the comparative advantages that NGOs can bring to mainstream education. The 6 NGOs surveyed are MV Foundation (child labour eradication), Pratham Mumbai Education Initiative (universalization of pre-primary and primary education in a metropolis), Bodh Shiksha Samiti (appropriate primary education for the urban poor), Rishi Valley Rural Education Centre (Multi-grade and Multi-level teaching/learning model), Eklavya (pedagogic renewal) and Centre for Education Management and Development (school improvement through management inputs).

The survey has established that the NGOs can and do play a strong role in assisting the State to complement the public education system and to improve its effectiveness. The experimental approaches of the NGOs have successfully tackled many shortcomings in schooling. NGO models in education increase the accountability of the schooling system to the beneficiaries. The NGOs surveyed do not aspire to be parallel providers of primary education, but wish to act as catalytic forces to improve the effectiveness of the Government system. The NGOs are keen to establish partnerships with the Government to share their models rather than create islands of excellence. The Government, however, is yet to recognize NGOs as credible and full-fledged partners. Collaboration with NGOs has tended to be fragmented, although some beginnings have been made to engage NGOs in national-level concerns. The study highlights the crying need for an "institutional mechanism" for GO-NGO dialogue that lends credibility and independence to NGO action. The NGOs surveyed in this study have the potential to grow from "participants" to "partners" in Government education programs.

The effectiveness of NGO action is best in evidence in the successful schooling of underprivileged children, communities in remote locations, scheduled caste, scheduled tribe and other children that face social barriers to education. NGOs have demonstrated that targeted actions are required for specific deprived groups, for instance, the urban poor, child workers or street



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children. The survey reveals that enhancing access to schooling is constrained more by a lack of good quality supply than lack of demand. The NGO experiences establish that there is a strong latent demand for education even among the poorest and a responsive education system can overcome the obstacle of poverty to bring children into schools. The MV Foundation, Pratham and Bodh have demonstrated this stance, whereby even poor communities found it possible to contribute to the schooling of their children. The challenge, however, is to retain the children in the school by making it interesting and worthwhile. An expanded pre-school education, special attention for first-generation learners, especially in the first three grades, remedial classes and bridge courses for over-age entrants to schools are considered to be important by the NGOs to increase enrolments and retention in the primary grades.

The NGOs surveyed have expanded the horizons of quality in schooling. Quality is defined by the NGOs in a much broader context than learning achievements of pupils. Acquisition of cognitive and non-cognitive abilities by children, a strong school-community link, relevance and contextuality of education are considered to be some of the indicators of quality. All the NGOs pursued community participation as a central plank for increasing the quality of education. Participation of parents in school management increases the accountability of schools and attendance rates of teachers and pupils. The NGOs have demonstrated that community resources (financial and human) lie largely unexploited and should be garnered, as should resources from the Panchayati Raj Institutions. The models of the NGOs surveyed reinforce the importance of a school-based approach to quality improvements and the need for decentralized academic support structures. The Rishi Valley Rural Education Centre, Bodh, Eklavya and CEMD have worked with improving quality by providing school-level inputs and enhancing the capacities of school heads and teachers. School heads and Principals are considered to be important change agents. The government needs to create and strengthen educational institutions at decentralized local levels. An "educational referral" that takes professional support right down to the village school needs to be developed.

The survey brings up a clear need for the NGOs to build specific capacities to measure and evaluate their programs. Although the NGOs had introduced new concepts of quality, they had not developed alternative standards and tools for evaluation of quality in learning. A systematic process of school-based action research emerged as an important need.

The survey makes it evident that NGO models cannot be scaled up without quality control or accompanying policy changes. The NGOs pioneered the concepts of the voluntary teacher and the alternative school to counter teacher absenteeism and to make appropriate education available for out of school children. However, the adoption of these approaches within the Government system tended to be as 'low cost' options. The Government adopted variants of the NGO models to address administrative and financial constraints. Large numbers of "para teachers" have been inducted with a pay level that is a fraction of the salary of regular teachers. Alternative schools established with community support receive less infrastructure support and less qualified teachers. This study, while recognizing the urgency to expand schooling with low-cost methods in the face of constrained resources, cautions against the undermining of the formal school system and the long term dilution of the State's financial responsibility for elementary education. A long-term vision for para teachers and alternative schools is imminent.

The NGOs surveyed had scaled up their innovative models and had transposed them within mainstream education. However, it is clear that the NGOs would need strategic institutional linkages in order to reach mass adaptation and replication. Innovation at the meso level will help the NGOs to move from micro action to macro application. In the intermediate stage, NGOs need to find institutional homes in the Government for their models and also recognize their own limitations. NGOs can take on a quality control role during scaling up. The NGOs should not get



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drawn into large-scale implementation but stay at the cutting edge of innovation and experimentation.

The NGOs need to pay attention to the development of their human resources, both technical and managerial, as they acquire a larger role. Professional development is the key to future organizational growth and technical excellence. Process documentation and action research tended to be neglected among most NGOs surveyed. The NGOs need to recognize the importance of external evaluation of their actions as a means of increasing credibility for large-scale application. The study concludes that NGOs need to build networks amongst themselves to create the opportunities for collective action and joint advocacy, which will help them to graduate to a macro role.

Finally, it is evident that NGOs cannot be the panacea for all the problems that beset elementary education. The significance of NGO participation in a large-scale public education system is small. The influence of NGOs can move to a more strategic plane in the future but probably not expand in quantitative terms. The government needs to create an enabling environment to encourage participation of NGOs of different kinds. NGOs could be small resource groups to assist at the field level, to catalyse innovations in schools and clusters; they could collaborate with key educational institutions of the Government for curriculum reform, training or improvement of education management; they could be professional centres for research and evaluation of micro activities; and they could perform social audits of the true impact and influence of Government programs. A few NGOs such as the ones surveyed for this study can also play a strategic role of participating in policy formulations. A climate of partnership based on principles of equality needs to be built up.

## I. INTRODUCTION

### *I.1. The Imperatives in Universalising Elementary Education*

Universal access to basic education still remains an unfulfilled pledge in many parts of the world, despite pronouncements at various international fora. The World Declaration on education for All, the Framework for Action To Meet Basic Learning Needs, the E9 Declaration for Education For All, and the 40-year old Universal Declaration of Human Rights were aimed at giving prominence to basic education. The Jomtien Conference of 1990 established the goal of achieving basic Education for All (EFA) by the year 2000. The Jomtien Declaration provided an expanded vision for basic education, to include early childhood care and education, programs for out-of-school children and literacy programs for adults. The Declaration laid emphasis on equity in providing access to every child, youth and adult as also quality in schooling to ensure acceptable learning levels. The Declaration also called for strengthening partnerships in the provision of education with non-Governmental organizations, the private sector, and local communities.

Several international and multilateral initiatives were launched to tackle illiteracy and the schooling needs of children in the wake of various international declarations. Following the Jomtien Conference Declaration of 1990, over 100 countries set up their own country-specific EFA goals and plans. The Dakar Declaration has re-established goals for the next decade. However, despite all the declarations, the oft-repeated cry that everyone has a right to education has not been transformed into reality in many deprived countries. An estimated 100 million children and above, more than half of them girls, are outside the purview of schooling. More than 960-m adults, two-thirds of them women, are illiterate. Over a 100 million children, who have enrolled, do not go on to complete the full primary education cycle. More millions, even while completing the cycle, do not acquire any appreciable reading and writing abilities, let alone the full complement of cognitive and non-cognitive development. If enrolment rates remain at current levels, it is estimated that in the year 2000, more than 160-m children will be outside schools, resulting from population growth. South Asia has the misfortune to be the most illiterate region in the world, with 395-m illiterate adults and 50 m out of school children[1]. In the next five years, an estimated 65 m children need to be brought into schooling for which an additional 2 million teachers are required to be trained and appointed. The gender gaps in access to education are particularly glaring in South Asia. South Asia's female literacy rate of 36% is the lowest among all regions of the world. The region has 45% of the world's illiterate women.

India mirrors many of these ills in the basic education scenario. The Constitution of India, when drafted envisaged free and compulsory education for all children upto the age of 14, within a period of 10 years. The National Policy on Education, 1986, amended in 1992, proclaimed the same goal to be achieved by the year 2000. With this deadline now gone past, the magnitude of the problem continues to daunt the country. Even the lesser goal of universal primary education (UPE) for children upto the age of 10 is yet to be reached. The 83rd Constitution Amendment Bill, 1997, seeks to make free education for all children of the country upto the age of 14 years a fundamental right. Perhaps prudently, it does not spell out any time limits or particular obligations of the State and communities at large in making this a reality.

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[1] Mahbub Ul Haq and Khadija Haq. Human Development in South Asia, 1998. The Education Challenge. Oxford University Press 1998.



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Universalization of Elementary Education (UEE) in India is still a distant prospect. The statistics of this non-achievement are only too well known. Half of all women and nearly one-third of men are illiterate. There are wide disparities in educational attainments across States and between gender. While the oft-quoted State of Kerala reached near-total literacy, pockets of Rajasthan have female literacy rates as low as 14%, posing a serious challenge to the process of social and economic development. Bihar and Rajasthan have the lowest female adult literacy rate of 27%. While the Gross Enrolment Ratio (GER) in the country increased to 90% in 1997-98, the Net Enrolment Ratio (NER) is only about 60.3%[2]. The NER for girls is 48.8%, over 22% lower than that of boys. The worst gender differential obtains in Rajasthan where the NER for girls is 47% lower than that of boys. 35-m children of the age group 6-11 years in the country were out of school in 1997. An average of nearly a quarter of the children enrolled across the primary Grades repeat classes. While in Kerala, all children enrolled in Grade I go on to Grade V, at the national level, only an average of 56% children survive to Grade V. India is, thus, grappling with serious problems of inadequate access, quality and inefficiency in the schooling system.

### *I.2. NGO partnerships for elementary education*

The centrality of education in the development process cannot be overstated. There is extensive evidence of high social and economic returns to education, specifically primary education. Although the Government has been steadily increasing its investment in education, the requirements and expectations of schooling have also grown. The mere existence of a school infrastructure is no longer sufficient. It must be a suitable structure with sufficient light and air and with water and toilet facilities. Teachers must not only be present and teaching (prevailing teacher absenteeism rates are 33%) in class, they must engage the children in joyful activities and strive to make education interesting for the rural poor through the use of new teaching/learning methods. Children must not only attain basic reading and writing skills, they should develop both cognitive and non-cognitive skills. The curriculum and pedagogy in schools should be relevant and meaningful for the life situations of the children attending school. In the face of such growing expectations from school education, the State is hard put to meet not only the basic needs of access to all children with efficiently managed education administration but is also required to be at the frontier of education innovation and quality improvements.

How can these growing expectations of excellence in elementary education be translated into reality? This study argues for partnerships between the Government and non-Government sectors to close the gap in access, equity and quality in elementary education. The Government has a significant responsibility for the provision of elementary education. However, it has not been able to fully discharge its responsibility. A number of innovations and successful models have evolved in the voluntary sector. It is becoming increasingly evident that a plurality of institutional partnerships is required for the realisation of the goals of UEE - between different agencies and institutions of the Government, between the Government and the NGO sector, between the Government and the private sector. NGO partnerships can be particularly fruitful in moving towards this goal. International declarations exhort NGOs to participate in the Government's commitment to increase the share of education in GDP to 6% now includes both Government and non-government resources.

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[2] EFA 2000 Assessment : Core EFA Indicators. United Nations 1999.



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### *1.3. Aims of the study*

The objective of the study is to document the role and contribution of a few NGOs in primary education. While NGOs are best associated with small projects and micro-level interventions, the aim is to enquire how NGOs could support and enrich education programs of a national dimension and cooperate with the Government in a broader macro setting. The underlying premise is that the goal of universalizing elementary education cannot be achieved in the short term by efforts from the Government alone and that sustainable and enduring links with the NGOs will contribute to achieving these goals. The study seeks to illustrate the comparative advantages that NGOs can bring to large-scale education projects and programs. It aims to analyse the nature and impact of the collaboration of the NGOs surveyed with the Government, to advocate a stronger role for the NGOs. It analyses the opportunities and constraints of scaling up innovative initiatives by NGOs in mainstream education. The study postulates a growing participation and partnership for NGOs in elementary education.

It is an opportune time in India for the Government to build partnerships with the voluntary sector. The importance of NGO work has grown over the years, with many NGOs demonstrating successful and cost-effective ways of addressing problems in education, whether it is to expand access to the disadvantaged or to find innovative methods to improve the quality of schooling. The time is ripe to examine these models and approaches and to find mechanisms for incorporating them into the State system of education for further potential upscaling and adaptation.

The study presents possible ways of enhancing collaboration between the Government and non-Government sectors. It explores how the Government could create an enabling environment for NGO participation in public programs and the means by which NGOs could build up individual and collective capacities to play a role of advocacy and support to the Government.

### *1.4. The study methodology*

The study presents the profiles of 6 successful NGO initiatives in primary education in India. These initiatives also represent alternative approaches to improving the education process and their larger application in mainstream education. The 6 NGOs surveyed operate with disadvantaged constituencies in a variety of settings and have:

- Played an important role in developing models for improving access to and quality of basic education;
- Instituted qualitative changes at the school level;
- Demonstrated a successful approach or a workable model;
- Scaled up their model to a sizeable dimension; and
- Collaborated with the larger public education system for the replication and adaptation of their model.

The setting for the study is the ongoing District Primary Education Program (DPEP) of the Government of India. The DPEP, launched by the Government of India in 1994, is a major initiative to reform the primary education sector. The program seeks to increase access to primary education, improve quality to enhance levels of learning among students at the primary level. External agencies have contributed funds to the tune of $ 2 b to this program.

The study does not attempt to analyze or evaluate the DPEP, nor does it seek to evaluate the activities of the NGOs surveyed. However, a large-scale program like the DPEP, that has access to tremendous human and financial resources, provides the context in which GO-NGO partnerships are discussed.

The study is based on a survey of 6 NGOs working in the field of education. These NGOs were selected for the effectiveness of their micro activities as well as their impact at a macro level. The NGOs address different aspects of educational backwardness and represent a cross-section of target groups. They operate in varied geographic settings. The selection of the NGOs is, however, not based on any sampling method. The NGOs surveyed are: M. Venkatarangaiya Foundation, Pratham Mumbai Education Initiative, Bodh Shiksha Samiti, Rishi Valley Rural Education Centre, Eklavya and the Centre for Education Management and Development (CEMD). Bodh, Pratham and MV Foundation have a strong agenda for social activism whereas Rishi Valley, Eklavya and CEMD are professional resource agencies. The expansion of the activities of Bodh and CEMD is relatively on a smaller scale than that of the others.

The profiles of the NGOs are based, on the one hand, on data and information collected from publications (Annual Reports, project descriptions, monitoring reports and reports by other agencies) and, on the other, on visits to NGO offices, their field operations and discussions with their functionaries. At least two visits were made to most NGOs. Enquiries were more intensive with some NGOs than others. Eklavya and CEMD were less intensively surveyed. The visits included discussions with senior functionaries of the NGOs as well as with grassroots workers at the school level. The visits allowed discussions with school Principals, school teachers, voluntary workers, members of School Education Committees, Village Education Committees, elected Panchayat leaders, block and mandal level education officers, youth volunteers and parents. The study benefited from insights provided by officials in the Department of Education, the DPEP group, the Adult Education and the Non-Formal Education Departments.

In addition to secondary published information, the survey collected primary information on the activities of the NGOs, particularly those relating to collaboration with the Government, which were mostly not documented. A set of questionnaires was used with all NGOs (except CEMD), for qualitative information on the NGOs. The questionnaires were customized to each NGO, although some common themes were captured for all. The enquiry was also based on open-ended discussions with the NGO functionaries and their collaborators, with the aim of bringing out contemporary perspectives for GO-NGO collaboration. The report thus presents a unique mixture of the role and contribution of NGO activities and their perceptions.

## II. THE PROFILES OF NGOs SURVEYED

**Box 1 : The Core Activities of the NGOs Surveyed**

| NAME OF THE NGO | LOCATION[3] | THE MODEL |
|---|---|---|
| M.V. Foundation | Secunderbad, Andhra Pradesh | Abolition of child labour through education. |
| Pratham Mumbai Education Initiative | Mumbai, Maharashtra | Community-based, low-cost early childhood education. Universalization of pre-primary and primary education in a metropolis. |
| Bodh Shiksha Samiti | Jaipur, Rajasthan | Appropriate schooling for the urban poor. |
| Rishi Valley Rural Education Centre | Chittoor, Andhra Pradesh | Multi-grade, multi-level classes. |
| Eklavya | Bhopal, Madhya Pradesh | Pedagogical renewal through academic and administrative restructuring. |
| Centre for Education Management and Development | New Delhi | School improvement through management inputs. |

### *II.1. M.V. FOUNDATION.*

Official statistics put the number of child labourers in India around 17-18 millions, whereas unofficially, there are an estimated 44 million working children in India[4]. Legislation to combat child labour in India is both inadequate and poorly enforced. Firstly, it only recognizes the problem of working children in hazardous industries. Despite existing legislation, there are millions of children, sometimes as young as 4-5 years old, working in extremely dangerous conditions in glass, brass ware, lock, carpet and match industries, among others. In addition, there are the silent millions who work in cottage industries, factories, agriculture or simply at home, cooking, cleaning, looking after younger siblings and helping their parents. These children constitute the never-been-to-school category, posing a serious challenge to the task of universalizing elementary education. Despite the allocation of substantial funds for the eradication of child labour, Governmental strategies to combat the problem have not been very effective.

The MV Foundation (MVF), a private, charitable Trust in Andhra Pradesh, has developed a model that uses education as a means of tackling child labour. MVF's uncompromising agenda is that every child out of school is a working child, and ensuring access to education is the only real answer to tackling the problem of working children. The main thrust of MVF's work has been to bring bonded child labourers and working children into the ambit of school education. Starting its work in 1991 in 3 villages in Ranga Reddy district of Andhra

[3] Location of the NGO offices. Their activities are spread across different States and districts.

[4] Neera Burra. Born to Work : Child Labour in India, Oxford University Press, 1995.



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Pradesh, MVF has withdrawn 80000 children from work and has enrolled them into schools. 4000 bonded child labourers have been liberated and put into schools. The age group of children varies from the very young to adolescents. MVF now operates in nearly 500 villages in which 90% of all children in the 5-11 age group are in schools. The organization has made a significant dent in the schooling of the difficult age group of 9-14 years. 5000 adolescent children (including 2000 adolescent working girls) have been enrolled through camps and bridge courses into formal schools. 157 villages have been declared child labour free.

MVF uses a set of strategies and systematic efforts to put working children into the school system. It runs short and long-term residential camps, which help the children to go through the difficult process of withdrawing from work and preparing for school. Parents are also oriented to adjust to the schooling of their children. While young children are encouraged to join school directly, the older ones, mostly first-generation learners, are conditioned to the process of schooling in long-term camps.

One of the key features of MVF's intervention is the reliance on the formal, regular Government schools to provide for the education of hitherto working children. MVF has eschewed the use of special schools for child labourers. MVF has established that the Non-Formal Education (NFE) Centres for working children and over-age children, by offering flexible timings and a compressed curriculum, do not really help to break the child labour cycle. MVF designed residential camps primarily to ensure that children do not relapse back to work. MVF also developed the unique concept of the bridge course to help working children come on par to join the appropriate Grade. MVF's endeavour has been to reinforce the role of the formal school as a means of ensuring equity in schooling, given the long-standing criticism that the NFE system provides "second class" education to poor children. Social mobilization and awareness building among communities and parents is the mainstay of MVF's work. In many villages where MVF has intervened, communities are contributing to teacher salaries, building and furniture costs, where State support has fallen short of requirements.

The MVF approach to tackling child labour differs from that followed by the National Child Labour Eradication Program of the Government of India. NCLEP provides support for the setting up of special schools for child labourers, financial incentives to parents and mid-day meals to attract children into schools. MVF has demonstrated that financial incentives and special facilities are neither necessary nor sufficient to pull children away from work.

MVF's activities have expanded significantly over the years. MVF's current operations span 18 mandals covering about 500 villages. Over 8000 youth volunteers, 1600 education activists, 1500 Government teachers, 3000 women's groups, hundreds of elected representatives and members of Parent Teacher Associations (PTAs) are associated with its program. MVF has active interaction with Parent Teacher Associations and Gram Panchayats in 400 villages. 1500 Government teachers joined the Baala Kaarmika Vimochana Vedika (BKVV), a forum for the elimination of child labour. Apart from playing the role of advocacy, the BKVV has also emerged as a nodal resource point for training teachers and NFE instructors.

**Box 2 : Growth of MV Foundation's Activities**

| MVF's coverage | 1991/92 | 1997/98 |
|---|---|---|
| No. of villages | 3 | 470 |
| No. of mandals | 1 | 18 |
| MVF Employees : | | |
| Education Activists (Volunteer Teachers) | 15 | 1600 |
| Supervisors | 5 | 80 |
| Camp teachers/District Resource Unit and office staff | 15 | 200 |
| Unpaid volunteers working with MVF | 40 | 10000 |
| No of Youth Clubs | 40 (1994) | 700 |
| No of Women's Groups | 10 (1994) | 3000 |
| Formation of Parent-Teacher Associations | 3 villages (1993) | 400 villages |
| Membership of the Youth Forum | 40 | 8000 |
| Membership of the Teachers' Forum | 16 | 2000 |

MVF has influenced the larger educational scenario by collaborating closely with Government schools. MVF's work has been instrumental in making the Government of Andhra Pradesh revamp several thousand NFE centres in the State into day centres, operating in much the same way as formal schools do, or as motivation centres in the villages, whereas earlier they were running evening classes. MVF has trained NFE instructors to play the role of education activists rather than act as poor substitutes for teachers. On the one hand, MVF's activities exposes the severe limitations of the traditional NFE program and, on the other hand, reaffirms the role of the formal school in making even the most difficult group literate. The Government of Andhra Pradesh has also made a strong policy pronouncement for the eradication of child labour.

MVF's work has created the climate for taking up schooling as an inalienable child right, with responsibilities attached to both the Government and the parents. Although poverty is a major limiting factor in the schooling of the deprived, the approach used by MVF has demonstrated that it is indeed possible to ensure schooling of the poorest and that too without financial incentives to parents. Even the poorest communities have found it possible to invest in the education of their children[5]. In fact, a large gap has emerged between the expectations of the communities for education and the ability of Government infrastructure to cope with increased demand. With large numbers of working children coming into formal schools, the State has been hard pressed to provide additional classrooms and teachers for the growing number of new enrolees. MVF has had to provide a large number of voluntary teachers to the Government schools to cope with the increase in class sizes. MVF has provided 635 voluntary teachers to work in Government schools as a result of the success of its enrolment drives. MVF's mobilization work with communities has led to Parent Teacher Associations paying for another 505 teachers to work in Government schools. A large collective of

[5] M.V. Foundation. Survey of parents' investment in education. Survey of socio-economic background of school going and non school going children.

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Government teachers constitutes the Forum for Liberation of Children from Work and supports MVF in withdrawing children from work, by giving them special attention in bridge courses and participating in enrolment drives.

The MVF model has been replicated widely by a number of Government and non-Government agencies to tackle the problem of child labour. The 'Back to School' program of the Government of Andhra Pradesh embraced the camp approach of MVF. The Social Welfare Department hostels were used to run camps for getting children out of work and preparing them for schools. 1 00,000 children are estimated to have been sent to formal schools from 34 hostels. The Department of Women and Child Development, Government of Andhra Pradesh, used Women's Training Institutes to run camps for girl child labourers. The Andhra Pradesh Women's Cooperative Finance Corporation has taken up the model as a pilot project to rehabilitate working girl children from both hazardous and non-hazardous industries. 23 Women's Training Centres are running residential courses for girls to mainstream them into regular schools. These training institutes are expected to make a dent in the schooling of adolescent girls and in educating women. The District Primary Education Program in Andhra Pradesh is collaborating with MVF to run a pilot project for the eradication of child labour in 8 districts. Many MVF volunteers have been taken over by the DPEP under the project. MVF is also providing training and technical support to DPEP in other States. A number of NGOs have adopted the model of MVF.

MVF's work has established that child labourers are a very important constituency among the unschooled. The NGO has demonstrated that even the most difficult target group can be brought into schools with determined efforts. MVF's work has effectively complemented the Government's role and has also reinforced the intrinsic value and trust in the Government schooling system.

**Box 3 : Scaling up and Replication of MVF's Model**

| IMPLEMENTING AGENCY | PROGRAM AND ITS REACH | MVF'S ROLE |
|---|---|---|
| Social Welfare Department, Government of Andhra Pradesh. | Back to School Program. 100000 children enrolled. | Transfer of the Bridge Course. Training of volunteers, social welfare hostel wardens |
| Department of Women and Child Welfare, Government of Andhra Pradesh | Girl Child Program in 23 districts | Transfer of the bridge course. Training of volunteers for awareness building. |
| Joint DPEP-UNICEF | Child Labour Pilot Project in 20 mandals in 8 districts of Andhra Pradesh | MVF's implementation in 2 mandals and use of MVF model in 18 mandals. |
| District Primary Education Program | Alternative Schooling and Bridge course adaptation in Uttar Pradesh, Tamil Nadu, Haryana, Gujarat. | Transfer of the bridge course. Training for State Coordinators for sensitization on child labour. |
| State Governments of Tamil Nadu Madhya Pradesh and West Bengal. | Eradication of Child Labour Programs in the States. | Resource Group for the programs. |
| District Administration, Kurnool, Andhra Pradesh. | National Child Labour Eradication Project | Training for volunteers and sensitization of educational personnel on child labour issues. |
| Police Department, Reddy Foundation. Hyderabad city. | Pro-active stance by police officers to detect and end child labour. Police Stations become Child-Friendly. | Transfer of the camp model and sensitization on child labour issues. |
| Bala Jyothi, Hyderabad | National Child Labour Eradication Project. Primary schooling for the urban deprived. 250 schools. | Use of MVF's camp approach. |
| NGOs : Jeevika | Child Labour project in Karnataka | Transfer of Bridge course and the camp approach. |
| Prem | Child Labour project in Orissa | Transfer of Bridge course and the camp approach. |
| Lok Jumbish, Rajasthan | Camps for girl children in 18 blocks | Initiated camps in 4 blocks and use of MVF model in 14 other blocks by Lok Jumbish. |
| NGOs in Rajasthan, Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra, Tamil Nadu and Haryana | Respective NGO activities | Training on community mobilization for child labour eradication. |

### *II.2. PRATHAM MUMBAI EDUCATION INITIATIVE*

Effective early childhood education is increasingly recognized as an important stepping stone towards universal primary education (UPE). Pre-school education prepares children for formal schooling and the early initiation helps to retain them. The existence of early childhood education also frees older children, especially girls, from the responsibility of looking after younger siblings and enables them to go to school themselves. India is one of the few countries in the South Asian region which offers publicly funded Early Childhood Education (ECE) programs through its network of Integrated Child Development Services (ICDS) centres. However, these centres do not cover the entire country, focus primarily on nutrition and have a limited education component. Their role in pre-school education has



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only started to be recognized. The Gross Enrolment Ratio for ECE in recognized institutions in the country was only 16.9% in 1997-98[6].

The Pratham Mumbai Education Initiative started using early childhood education as a means to universalize primary education when it started its work in the city of Mumbai. Pratham, a public charitable trust, began with an UNICEF initiative, which aimed to send all children to-school in Mumbai City. Addressing the total lack of pre-school facilities for the urban deprived in Mumbai, a few balwadis (pre-school centres) were started in 1995. Pratham now runs nearly 3000 balwadis in the slums of Mumbai, catering to more than half of Mumbai's needs. Pratham's defined objective is to ensure that all children in the age group of 3-10 years are enrolled in pre-school centres or primary schools. Pratham aims to achieve 100% pre-school coverage (age 3-5) in the city of Mumbai by the end of 1999 and full primary school coverage for all children (age 6-10) by 2001.

Pratham has developed a low-cost and effective model for early childhood education that is community based. The balwadi is set up on community demand and on community space. A fee is collected from each child, which goes towards the salary of the instructor. Pratham recruits promising youngsters from the slums, provides them with the requisite training and pays them a small honorarium. Appropriate teaching/learning materials are provided. The accent is on joyful learning for children. The low-cost model is run at Rs 4500 per balwadi and includes the instructor fee (partial), materials, support cost, training cost and overall monitoring cost. The model is stated to be replicable at a cost of Rs 250 per child, per year. The youth in the slums have been Pratham's strongest allies in the cause for education. Like MVF, Pratham has found willing and enthusiastic support to pre-school and school education from parents and community leaders.

After reaching universal pre-school coverage, Pratham hopes to hand over financial responsibility of these centres to the Municipal Corporation of Mumbai, while retaining management responsibility. The NGO has argued that taking over the pre-school education centre network all over Mumbai will only entail 2% of the Municipal Corporation's education budget. In the long run, Pratham aims to increase the efficiency and accountability of public education with minimal incremental financial inputs.

Pratham, like the MV Foundation, is seeking to make the Government education network take cognizance of the schooling needs of the poor and be responsive to the communities. Although Pratham's program currently lies predominantly in pre-school education facilities in the slums of Mumbai, it operates from resource centers within a number of Municipal Schools in Mumbai. Pratham's stance is that it is impossible to universalize primary education without working with Municipal Schools. The NGO is currently developing a 3-year plan to work with all the1254 Municipal schools in Mumbai to bring about policy changes for primary education. Pratham will spearhead the setting up of Education Advisory Committees in each of the 1254 schools to build community participation in the schooling process. The Education Advisory Committees are expected to take on the role of preparing microplans for universal primary education (UPE) in their catchment area.

Pratham's model is strongly community-based. The balwadi instructors are drawn from the community, youngsters who are keen to make a mark as community leaders. Pratham has

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[6] Department of Women and Child Development, Ministry of Human Resource Development, Government of India.

helped to create women's groups or Mahila Mandals for each of the balwadis, and the long-term plan is to devolve the responsibility of running the balwadis to the women's groups.

The rapid increase in the number of Pratham's balwadis in the last two years has been impressive. Pratham intends to use the massive community net created for balwadis to act as a springboard for universalizing primary education. By the end of 1998, the Mayor of Mumbai launched the slogan "Every School Beautiful, Every Child in School and Every Child Learning" with Pratham's collaboration. Although Pratham's operations have gone to scale very rapidly in an effort to make access to pre-school education universal, there is also an increasing recognition of the need for quality. In Pratham's current assessment, children that do not even now have access to pre-school facilities belong to the hard-core unreached, such as beggars, street and rag-picking children and migratory children, who are estimated at about 1% of the population of school-going age. However, the question of dropouts has become a more pressing problem. An estimated 30% non-learning children in schools require special attention to prevent them from dropping out. As part of its Primary Education program, Pratham introduced a joyful math-learning program in some of the Municipal Schools of Mumbai, after a survey diagnosed that a large proportion of children surveyed on a sample basis in class III did not have class I competencies. Pratham is currently running 339 remedial classes in 150 schools for 6000 children in Classes III and IV, who do not have Class I competencies. The remedial or 'study' classes help children to acquire basic competencies in Maths and language. Through this program, Pratham is hoping to bring recognition among schools and teachers of the need for remedial education to mitigate drop-outs and poor learning.

Pratham has discovered that children coming from a deprived background do not have a supportive learning environment and feel alienated in schools. The municipal school teachers, even motivated ones, find it difficult to address their special needs. The demands on the teachers to deal with the slow learners are very high. While universal access has been pursued as an immediate strategy, there is clear recognition that only by improving the quality of schooling can the positive effects of growing enrolments be sustained. This led Pratham to start the Balsakhi program in 1140 schools where Pratham teachers act as "friends" of slow learning children and give them special attention. This program has found immediate support and welcome among the teachers.

In its mission to bring all 6-10 year old children into school, Pratham began a pilot program with the Municipal Corporation in 6 Municipal wards of Mumbai. Adopting the MVF model, 300 bridge courses were started to enrol never-been-to-school children and drop-outs. The primary objective of these classes was to prepare children, academically and socially to enter a regular classroom and to build support among their families for school attendance and learning[7]. The bridge course classes begin in the community (like balwadis) and move to the local municipal school building if space is available.

Pratham's model has also been taken to other cities and locations with the involvement of local groups. Ahmedabad, Vadodara, Pune, Delhi, Patna and Bangalore have all started programs for the schooling of the deprived. All these are being organized as citizens' missions and Pratham is encouraging local groups to take the leadership and form their own Trusts and local support groups to implement their plans. The only rural programs are

[7] Pratham Mumbai Education Initiative. Annual Report 1998-99.



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currently running in Alibagh, Raigad districts of Maharashtra and in the tribal blocks of Jawhar and Mokhada in Thane district of Maharashtra.

**Box 4 : Scaling up and Expansion of Pratham's Program**

| PROGRAM | SCOPE | PRATHAM'S ROLE |
|---|---|---|
| Balwadi Program of pre-school education in the slums of Mumbai | 2768 balwadis, with 52000 children | Sets up a balwadi with community support, provides a trained teacher and teaching/learning materials |
| Remedial classes | 339 classes, 6000 children in Grade III and IV, in 150 schools. | Pratham resource persons run special remedial classes for children who do not have even Grade I competencies |
| Balsakhi project | 1140 schools, 30000 children, 750 balsakhis. | Remedial education; support to lagging children and recently enrolled out of school children. |
| Bridge courses | 700 bridge classes, 12000 children | Pratham teachers prepare children to join school; community based school-induction program. |
| Education posts | 448 posts, with a population of 20000 people each | Pratham helps schools to act as a net for all unenrolled children. |
| Formation of education advisory committees with representation from communities, NGOs etc. | All 1254 Municipal schools of Mumbai (planned) | Pratham will use these to act as nerve centres for micro planning and targeted drive for 100% enrolment in primary classes. |
| Computer-assisted learning centres | 11 locations, with 8000 students | Pratham has set these up in its resource centre schools for accelerating learning. |
| Universal pre-school and primary education | Alibag block in District Raigad, Maharashtra, 132 villages | Pratham is running balwadis and (remedial) study classes |
| Universal pre-school and primary education | Jawhar and Mokahada blocks in Thane district, Maharashtra | Pratham is running pre-school centres and study classes in tribal villages. |
| Replication of Pratham Model in other urban centres | Ahmedabad, Pune, Delhi, Vadodara, Bangalore and Patna | Pratham is offering assistance to local partners to replicate its low-cost early childhood care model in these cities. |

Pratham's work also embodies a nascent model for corporate partnership in a social cause. The development bank, ICICI, started with supporting Pratham in a small way, but has now made a far reaching commitment to back Pratham's activities. It is expected that this initiative will lead to the development of a new pattern of social funding by the corporate sector. Many corporate entities have sponsored the involvement of the best of their talent and human resources to work with the Pratham cause. Pratham spearheaded a nation-wide debate on the 83rd Constitution Amendment Bill[8], which seeks to make access to elementary education a fundamental right. Pratham is also currently building up an NGO Alliance group,

[8] The Constitution (83rd Amendment) Bill, seeking to make elementary education a fundamental right, was introduced in the Rajya Sabha in 1997. The salient features of the Bill are : provision of free and compulsory education to all children of 6-14 years age in State institutions; parents have a duty to send every child of 6-14 years age to school; and the law for enforcement of the right to education will be formulated within one year of the commencement of the Constitution (83rd Amendment) Act. This Bill has not yet been ratified in the Parliament due to the ambiguities concerning the scope of the Bill and its enforcement. The NGOs community is keen to stimulate a nation-wide debate on the Bill.



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to bring together a number of NGOs for the cause of universalizing elementary education and to garner political support for elementary education.

### *II.3. BODH SHIKSHA SAMITI*

The problems of the urban poor have been growing in recent years. The unrelenting migration to urban cities has led to a stupendous growth of slums, with all its attendant problems. In 1991, it was estimated that between 40-50% of the population in Metropolitan cities lived in slums. Rapid urbanization has put pressure not only on the big three – Mumbai, Delhi and Calcutta, but also on several smaller cities. Slums in urban cities have been growing at an alarming rate, putting tremendous pressure on social and physical infrastructure. As slums mostly tend to be unrecognized colonies, with the Government paying little or no attention to the provision of essential services and basic amenities, the slum dwellers are mired in the most degrading form of poverty. The Government's programs for poverty alleviation have hitherto concentrated on the rural poor. In recent years, both the Government and international agencies have begun to support projects for the urban poor.

Bodh Shiksha Samiti began its work in the 1980s in the slums of Jaipur, Rajasthan, to provide appropriate education to the children of socially marginalized groups. Most of the slums did not have a school. Government schools, where they existed, did not provide a suitable learning environment for such children. Bodh took up the task of "evolving such pedagogic practices and processes which would enable children to receive appropriate, equitable, quality education, based on community participation and initiatives"[9].

Using education as a non-controversial entry point, Bodh built up a program of social mobilization. Like Pratham, the initiators of Bodh were not educationists but social activists who took up primary education as a felt need of the community. Bodh has brought to the forefront, the need to develop strategies to address the schooling of the urban poor. There is now a growing recognition that a large mass of deprived children in urban areas are unschooled. The city of Jaipur was the experimental ground in which Bodh tried out its model. A survey[10] undertaken by Bodh showed that an estimated 30% of the population of the city of Jaipur lives in slums. This survey revealed that of the 279 slums in Jaipur, only 74 have Government school facilities. In nearly 50% of the slum colonies, more than half the children were out of school.

Bodh Shiksha Samiti started with opening a school in one of the slums of Jaipur, where none existed. Thereafter, 6 more community schools were opened. The main concern was to evolve meaningful and appropriate education for children who face a fragile socio-economic fabric. Bodh's concept of education for slum children is strongly rooted in aspirations of equity in schooling. Bodh has worked with different types of disadvantaged communities – untouchables, scheduled castes, nomadic tribes, landless agricultural labourers, traditional artisans or simply the very poor. The starting premise was that the education process for these children should in no way be inferior to the formal education system. Thus, Bodh's approach to children's holistic development through schooling encompasses non-

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[9] Bodh Shiksha Samiti. Integrated Community Schools for Appropriate Elementary Education. Chetna, November 1997.

[10] UNICEF (Rajasthan) and Bodh Shiksha Samiti. Base Line Study of Jaipur, 1998.

discriminatory and egalitarian principles in education. Building human dignity, providing a recreational outlook and avenues for self-expression for the children are some of the aims of schooling. Bodh's concept of quality in education incorporates the development of both cognitive and non-cognitive skills. To that end, a very flexible and joyful process of teaching/learning is followed.

To provide schooling to slum children, Bodh recruited motivated, under qualified youth and put them through intensive teacher training. The basic tenets of Bodh's teacher training program is that the teachers must share the concerns and world view of the children, rather than simply acquire skills for teaching. The 3-month teacher training program is based on a process of self-reflection, mutual interaction, art and dancing and discussions on teaching-learning processes. No rigid structure is followed. In Bodh's experience, breaking of the barrier between the teacher and the student acts as a gateway to stimulating individual creativity among children. As part of their work, Bodh teachers have to make daily contacts with the parents and communities on the education of their children. Over the years, Bodh has fine-tuned its model for teacher training and curriculum transaction based on joyful learning and development of both cognitive and non-cognitive skills among children.

Much in the same line of thinking as MV Foundation and Pratham, Bodh also believes in the crucial importance of collaborating with the Government schooling system in order to have a larger influence. While the educational model was evolved for the urban deprived, it can be used in other settings too. Having expanded to 7 slum schools, Bodh took up a pilot program in 10 Municipal Schools of Jaipur to demonstrate its model for quality primary education. The Mainstream Intervention Program as it is called, involves the provision of Bodh resource teachers to each of the 10 schools taken up for experimentation. The resource teacher interacts with the Government teachers in daily planning hours to design class lessons. A school-community contact program is introduced. The Municipal schools collaborate in this endeavour by providing teachers and teaching aids as required by Bodh. A maximum class size of 30 is maintained and children from Grades I-III are grouped together to learn in a collaborative mode.

Bodh's intervention in the Municipal schools has been rewarding as it demonstrated the workability of the Bodh model for appropriate education in a formal and well-entrenched Government schooling system. It has been reported that drop out rates from the Bodh classes fell dramatically and a strong link was created between the school and the community. The Municipal schools have reported a reduction in drop out rates from 60% to less than 20%. There is also reported evidence of improvements in the learning levels. The changes are apparent in Grade III where some children demonstrated abilities of Grade IV. A study by Bodh showed that children in the slum schools were gaining both cognitive and non-cognitive abilities.

Bodh is nominated as the Coordinator of the National Core Group for the education of the urban poor. The Department of Education is also a member of this core group. Bodh's model of community schools is replicated in a Joint United Nations Agencies initiative for appropriate schooling for the urban poor in Jaipur and the rest of urban Rajasthan. The program envisages the setting up of community schools in school-less habitations and the transforming of Government schools through the adoption of the community-based model. Bodh will provide training and resource support. Whereas the Mainstream Intervention Program with the Municipal schools was a faithful reproduction of the Bodh model, the UN system will use an adapted and modified model. Given the pressure on teacher numbers, a



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class size of 30 (that Bodh insisted on for the Mainstream Intervention Program) may not be maintained and teacher training is expected to follow the cascade model of the Government unlike the intensive on-site support that Bodh has been providing to teachers. Bodh is a resource agency for DPEP to develop an appropriate model of education for the urban poor, and for providing technical support to Alternative Schools in the States of Uttar Pradesh, Tamil Nadu, Orissa and Haryana. Bodh is a member of an NCERT Taskforce for the development of new teaching learning materials for the primary years.

**Box 5 : Scaling up and Replication of Bodh's Program**

| PARTNER AGENCY | PROGRAM | BODH'S ROLE |
|---|---|---|
| Municipal Corporation of Jaipur | Pilot program for joyful learning in 10 Municipal Schools of Jaipur. | Provision of Bodh teachers, training of Government teachers, introduction of Bodh teaching methodology, teaching/learning material. |
| Joint UN Agencies Initiative | Program to improve primary education in urban Rajasthan covering 100 existing govt. schools in Jaipur and 50 new community schools. | Technical Support Agency. Adoption of Bodh model of community schools. Curricular and TLM development. |
| District Primary Education Program in Rajasthan, Uttar Pradesh and Maharashtra | Alternative Schools | Training of Teachers and State Resource Groups. |
| District Primary Education Program in Tamil Nadu, Orissa | Alternative Schools | Visit to Bodh and study of its model by State Resource Groups. |
| Child Relief and You (CRY) | Capacity building of 15-20 NGOs in Rajasthan | Training and technical support. |
| CARE India | Setting up of 15 elementary schools on a pilot basis in rural areas. | Organizational development and technical support |

In the future, Bodh intends to evolve into a technical and academic support group, rather than grow as an agency for delivering educational services. While continuing its anchor in the 7 slum schools, Bodh aims to become a resource agency and to continue the development and sharing of innovative work. The 7 slum schools are likely to grow vertically to add upper primary classes and also incorporate provisions for Education for All for adults, particularly women. The 7 slum schools will act as resource centres to support Bodh's involvement in large programs such as the Joint UN initiative. Bodh has envisaged a decentralized and autonomous management system for the slum schools whereby the School Management Committees and community representatives will take over the management and running of schools in the 7 slums, thereby creating models of independent management at the grassroots level.

### *II.4. RISHI VALLEY RURAL EDUCATION CENTRE*

The Rishi Valley Rural Education Centre (RVREC) was set up in the early 1980s with the objective of catering to the education needs of the rural countryside of Andhra Pradesh, adjoining the well-known Rishi Valley Public School. The philosopher J. Krishnamurti, who



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founded the school, envisioned that the affluent urban public school should share its resources with the poorer countryside. This led to the start of a rural education program. The Rishi Valley Public School started the RVREC satellite schools program and has functioned as an important resource base for the setting up of 16 satellite schools in the rural countryside. The RVREC satellite schools cater to the population in isolated hamlets that do not have access to schooling facilities. Starting with a single room multi-grade school, RVREC has now grown into a professional agency with a full-fledged teacher training program, a curriculum and teaching/learning material development cell, a vocational training centre and sixteen one-room village schools. These 16 multi-grade, multi-level satellite schools have come up in remote hamlets of Chittoor district in Andhra Pradesh, where no Government school was available within easy distance. The RVREC then went on to develop a comprehensive education program. Catering to the needs of remote one-room schools, with a local teacher and few children, the RVREC has acquired a special strength in running single-teacher, multi Grade schools.

The RVREC experimented with alternatives to the traditional textbook. The educational kit developed by the RVREC, "School-in-a-Box", containing 1500 laminated cards, is a major innovation in teaching/learning materials for multi-grade schools. The kit replaces conventional textbooks. The education kit is designed for both multi-grade and multi-level teaching, allowing children to proceed at their own pace of learning. Along with the education kit, RVREC also developed a supportive teacher education program and evaluation systems. The RVREC schools provide an education program that is comprehensive and academically sound. The multi-grade schools provide a congenial atmosphere for first-generation learners and prevent them from dropping out.

The satellite school program of RVREC is also closely allied to environment and ecology. Each of the 16 schools started in completely barren land, but now nurture a re-generated ecology. Each of the schools has grown fruit trees such as papaya and custard apple, providing nutrition supplement to the children. The one-room schools have turned into resource centres in the villages for community activities. All the 16 schools have full-fledged community organizations that participate not only in the running of the schools, but in all village matters. The rural education program has been a way of reviving the village commons. The strong focus on ecology and soil conservation has helped to rejuvenate the rural environment.

The RVREC's work has enormous potential for replication in the country. A majority of Indian rural schools are run by single teachers, thereby necessitating multi-grade teaching. The RVREC has become a much sought-after resource agency for programs in several States of India. The education kit has been transcreated in several other languages. The Rishi Valley Institute of Educational Resources has emerged as an important centre for hands-on teacher training. It also houses a curriculum and educational materials development cell. RVREC has worked with several Government agencies for setting up education programs in multi-grade schools.

**Box 6 : Scaling up and Replication of RVREC's Program**

| PARTNER AGENCY | PROGRAM | RVREC'S ROLE |
|---|---|---|
| District Primary Education Program, Kerala | 30 Alternative multi-grade schools in remote locations | Transcreation of RV kit, training, back up support through Kerala |

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| | | DIET. |
| Integrated Tribal Development Authority, Paderu, Andhra Pradesh | 2000 remote multi-grade tribal schools | Use of RV kit, training, back up and monitoring and creation of resource centres for every 25 schools |
| H.D. Kote, Mysore district, Government of Karnataka | 200 formal schools | Transcreation of RV kit, training and back up through Mysore DIET |
| Mehboobnagar, Andhra Pradesh | 9 mandals, 2000 over-age girls | Organization of summer camps to enrol the girls in school |
| Tamil Nadu Slums Department | Slum schools, NFE centres, girl children schools | Training of instructors, teachers in multigrade teaching. |
| Uttar Pradesh DPEP | 60 Alternative schools | Training and building capacities of DIET staff for multigrade teaching/learning. |
| Education Depts. of Government of Andhra Pradesh, Assam, Kerala, Karnataka and Tamil Nadu. UNICEF, Action Aid | Multi-grade kit testing | Transcreation of RV kit, resource support, monitoring and feedback. |
| Joint DPEP-UNICEF | Child labour pilot project in 20 mandals in 8 districts of Andhra Pradesh | Use of RV kit, training of a core group of educational personnel and technical support. |
| DPEP, Mysore, Karnataka (Proposed) | Multi-grade teaching in 2000 formal schools | Technical support. |
| Andhra Pradesh Government (Proposed) | 3000 Non-Formal Education Centres | Use of RV kit, teacher training, support |

The RVREC is poised to grow as a professional agency by continuing its work with an innovative education package - curriculum development, educational materials and teacher training.

### *II.5. EKLAVYA*

The foundation of Eklavya goes back to1972 when it started with educational innovation in the State of Madhya Pradesh. Two voluntary organizations, Kishore Bharti and Friends Rural Centre, that were predecessors of Eklavya, started with developing innovative curriculum, teaching methodologies and educational materials for science teaching. It was found that science teaching in middle schools was confined to only textbooks. Eklavya (registered under this name in 1982), had pioneered the concept of activity-based science teaching in a few middle schools through the Hoshangabad Science Teaching Program (HSTP) in Madhya Pradesh in 1978. The NGO garnered support from middle and high school teachers, university professors, administrators and people from the area. A science kit, appropriate for rural schools, was developed and the objective was to use activity-based teaching as a means to nurture the spirit of enquiry in the child. Eklavya attempted to re-model science education in middle schools based on child-centred teaching, where children learn by discovery, learn by performing activities and learn from the environment rather than only from books[11].

[11] Eklavya. Institute for Educational Research and Innovative Action. Building Systems, Networks and Research Studies for Educational Change. Narrative Report 1998-99.



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Today, Eklavya has developed, in addition to HSTP, two school education programs with Government formal schools. It has a publishing unit that brings out a magazine for children, a magazine for teachers and produces a science-society news feature service for newspapers. Eklavya has worked with developing alternatives for elementary education curriculum, particularly alternative material on science education. HSTP's principle was that an effective innovation must address all aspects that affect teaching learning in the classroom, viz, curriculum, materials, teacher training and evaluation systems. The HSTP incorporated not only pedagogical renewal, curriculum and textbook development, but also came up with alternate models for school administration, evaluation and examination systems. Soon the program expanded to all schools in Hoshangabad district. The essence of this program was introduced as demonstration in 6-10 schools in 13 more districts of Madhya Pradesh for possible replication.

A remarkable aspect of Eklavya's experiment is that it was the first time an NGO entered the portals of Government schools. Eklavya has been a fore runner in establishing an effective collaboration within the Government school system. The process of quality improvement was participatory, with the involvement of practising teachers at every level. Eklavya's programs are decentralized to clusters of schools and use administrative structures at the block level to implement new ideas. It has created networks of trained Government teachers and developed systems for feedback and support at the field level so that teaching and learning processes can continuously evolve. As a prelude to upscaling the science teaching program to the whole State of Madhya Pradesh in recent years, Eklavya assisted in establishing science cells in the District Institutes of Education and Training (DIET) in 5 districts.

After several years of involvement with middle school science education, Eklavya moved to working with primary classes. This began with the growing realisation that a proper grounding of children at the primary level enhances the quality of learning in middle classes. Currently Eklavya is engaged in not only continuing its science teaching program, but is also piloting a program of social science teaching in high schools and is running an important program for improving curriculum and teaching for the primary classes.

The primary school program encompasses an innovative and integrated curriculum, teaching learning materials, teacher training, and continuous professional support to teachers within schools. *Prashika*, an experiment in making primary school education a joyful one, was started in 1987. The underlying premise was that the unfriendly and unattractive package of education offered to poor rural children was responsible for the low levels of enrolment and high rates of drop out. Eklavya developed an integrated curriculum for the primary school, providing for literacy, numeracy and environmental study. The essence of learning was skill development rather than information-memorizing, and the aim was to make schooling a joyful process for the children. Teachers drew professional support from monthly meetings for peer-sharing and from a decentralized system of academic resource support available to clusters of schools. Eklavya also developed alternate systems of student evaluation, school follow-up and monitoring and streamlined administrative procedures for purchase and distribution of teaching learning materials to schools.

Based on the gains of experimenting with Prashika, Eklavya collaborated with the State Government of Madhya Pradesh to develop a primary education program called "Seekhna Sikhana" package which included textbooks, teaching training, evaluation and administrative



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support[12]. Its primary education materials "seekhna sikhana" and "khushi khushi" with a strong accent on joyful learning were adopted for State wide implementation in collaboration with the State Council for Education Research and Training (SCERT). The SCERT began a long-standing collaboration with Eklavya for small-scale experimental trials to test new ideas. With the onset of DPEP, the experiment of Prashika increased from 25 schools to cover an entire block. Eklavya is collaborating with the District Primary Education Program of the Government of India to trial a new integrated curriculum with appropriate textbooks for classes I to V in 130 schools in Shahpur block of Betul district in Madhya Pradesh.

**Box 7 : Scaling up and Expansion and of Eklavya's Program**

| PROGRAM | SCOPE | EKLAVYA'S ROLE |
|---|---|---|
| Hoshangabad Science Teaching Program | 500 schools in Hoshangabad district; seeded in select schools in other 13 districts of Madhya Pradesh.<br>80000 students, 1000 teachers. | Curriculum, material development and teacher training. Development of science kit for practical experiments. |
| Pilot program for Social Science Teaching | 8 middle schools in Harda, Hoshangabad and Dewas districts of Madhya Pradesh.<br>20 teachers, 1000 students. | Curriculum and material development on a pilot scale. |
| Prashika, primary education pilot program | Trialling in DPEP, Shahpur block, Betul district, Madhya Pradesh.<br>130 schools, 300 teachers | Teacher training, teaching learning materials, textbooks, on-site school support to teachers. |
| Other partner agencies | | |
| Lok Jumbish | 56 schools in Rajasthan | Development of middle school science and social science curriculum |
| Government of Gujarat | 40 schools in collaboration with a voluntary group. | Resource support to development of science curriculum and materials for middle school (Grade IV-VII) |
| Collaboration with NGOs | Sampark (Jhabua)<br>Sambhav (Gwalior)<br>Deepalaya, Jagriti, Nirantar | Training to NGO representatives. Resource support for curriculum and material development |

Eklavya has emerged as an important NGO in matters of school education in Madhya Pradesh. Eklavya's network and contacts with other NGOs, and Government programs in other States as well as the National Council for Education Research and Training has brought national credence to the organization.

### *II. 6. CENTRE FOR EDUCATION MANAGEMENT AND DEVELOPMENT*

[12] Only Eklavya was able to take up the Government's offer for collaboration to trial an innovative primary education package in Madhya Pradesh.



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School reform programs have historically concentrated on pedagogy and teaching and learning processes as the means of increasing quality of education. However, pedagogic innovation and improved teacher training alone have not been adequate to bring about an effective and early transformation in the quality of schooling. The Centre for Education Management and Development (CEMD) started with the notion that an effective school requires a strong management backing to innovations and experiments. It was recognized that school improvement programs needed to encompass effective financial and human resource management and leadership for curricular and classroom change. CEMD identified a major weakness in the fact that school heads in India received practically no training to handle administrative and management functions. CEMD was founded with the objective of developing school improvement programs with a "whole-school-management" approach. This emerged from the felt need for a "systems approach" to improving school quality and to institutionalize the process of change and reform.

CEMD launched its activities through the Education Management Resource Program (EMRP) in 10 socio-economically disadvantaged Muslim schools in Delhi. EMRP aimed to develop a model for improving school effectiveness by increasing the capacities and skills of school management bodies to nurture and support quality improvements in schools and to promote action research.

**Box 8 : CEMD's Management Model For School Improvement**

| PROBLEM | INTERVENTIONS | IMPACT |
|---|---|---|
| Lack of an overall school-based improvement plan | - Leadership effectiveness training<br>- Human Resource Management<br>- Institutional Planning<br>- Curriculum and Instructional Leadership Building<br>- Community Interface | The school is able to set its own agenda for improvement and has the necessary capacities to implement school reform programs on a continuing basis. |
| Lack of common understanding of school values and goals among stakeholders | Vision-building workshops for teaching staff, School Management Committees, parents | The school sets goals for short and medium term and develops action plans. |
| Lack of management competencies among school authorities at all levels | Training of administrative staff. Principals' management training | Team building. Awareness of leadership and management role by Principals and school managers. |
| Ineffective teaching processes. Inadequate evaluation systems. | School plans for teaching, teacher empowerment, instructional leadership training program; MIS for teacher substitution and academic process monitoring. | Teaching process is more efficient and effective; regular feedback available. School management is in control of school affairs and empowered to give directions. |
| No standard or rational human resource management policy. | Personnel management and Human Resource Management plans. | Enhanced participation and motivation of teachers and staff in school affairs. |
| Lack of understanding of school resources | Financial systems and use of budget for school planning. | School has a view of resources at its command and is able to deploy them effectively based on its own priorities. |
| Parents and communities are distanced from school management and educational issues of their children | Interface with parents and communities, including joint objective setting workshops. | Parents and communities actively participate in school improvement plans. |

Based on the above, CEMD has developed a nascent model for improving school effectiveness through management inputs. The stakeholders of this program are the School Management Committees, Principals, teachers and parents. A participatory process of setting goals and objectives reduced the intimidating distance of the school from the communities. The Educational Leadership Program (ELP) was born out of the need to make School Heads and Principals effective agents for change. Responding to the training needs of school heads, the ELP was designed to provide professional support to Principals to optimize the use of available resources for improving the effectiveness of schools. Through ELP, CEMD has also helped to create professional and peer group networks for Principals and school teachers.

After working with private schools with poor resources that cater to the socio-economically disadvantaged, CEMD is now involved in transposing its model to a sample of Delhi Government schools. To do this, it is collaborating with different tiers of the education administration to sensitize administrators on a "management approach" to improving quality



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in schools. The collaboration with the State Council for Education Research and Training (SCERT) will create a core resource group within the institution that will disseminate the model to a larger number of schools. The prospective collaboration with the Central Institute of Education (CIE) to develop a Principals' Training Program will go a long way in developing a cadre of trained School Heads. CIE is an important institution for the delivery of teacher education programs – its new course for training in elementary education is particularly noteworthy as it is one of the first of its kind.

**Box 9 : Scaling up and Expansion of CEMD's Program**

| IMPLEMENTING AGENCY | PROGRAM | CEMD'S ROLE |
|---|---|---|
| Delhi Government, Central District | School reform programs in 58 Government schools and 100 (Government) aided schools | School-level inputs; Principals' training. |
| Navodaya Schools | Education Leadership Program (ELP) customized for 400 Navodaya schools | Adaptation of the ELP model, technical and research support. |
| State Council of Education Research and Training, Delhi | Institution building and capacity development | Training of Trainers from SCERT for propagation of school-based improvement programs. |
| Central Institute of Education (prospective) | Principals' Training Program | Conceptualization of the Training Program |
| District Institute of Education and Training, Bareli, Uttar Pradesh | Institutional development | Collaboration with the DIET and the Technical Support Group of the Department of Education to develop a plan. |
| State Institute of Education Management and Training (SIEMAT), Allahabad, Uttar Pradesh. (prospective) | Education Leadership Program customized for Education Officers, District Officials and staff of Block Resource Centres and DIETs. | Technical support to designing a program by SIEMAT that integrates the functioning of academic and administrative structures. |

CEMD is thus on the threshold of "institutionalizing" its model of building capacities of school managements to plan and implement "whole school" improvement plans, encompassing aspects of school administration, financial planning, pedagogy, teacher deployment and community involvement in schools.

## III. SURVEY FINDINGS

The survey has established that NGOs can and do play a strong role in assisting the State. It has validated the premise in the introduction of the report that NGOs can be strategic partners for the realisation of the long-awaited goal of universalizing elementary education in India. NGO experiments have given rise to cost effective approaches such as voluntary teachers, community schools, decentralized teacher training models and educational materials. NGO participation strengthens the community link, increases the transparency of Governmental interventions and enhances the accountability of the schooling system to beneficiaries. The NGOs surveyed have acquired the character of resource agencies,

providing support and training to Government institutions. They have influenced the larger educational scenario through the adaptation of their models. The NGOs surveyed in this study have the potential to grow from 'participants' to 'partners' in Government education programs.

It is, however, obvious that in aggregate terms, the participation of NGOs in primary education is negligible in the context of the large network of Government schools in India. The impact of NGO activities in primary education is, therefore, inherently limited in terms of the sheer scale of India's requirements. This survey does not alter this broad picture nor does it diminish the importance of Government schooling. In fact, all the NGOs surveyed view the provision of education to be primarily the duty of the Government and do not consider any dilution in its role and responsibility a desirable one. The NGOs did not aim to create islands of excellence, when the large Government network remains sluggish and ineffective. Eklavya and MVF have mainly worked with the Government schooling system. Rishi Valley and Bodh wished to take their experiments forward within the formal school network. The NGOs surveyed felt that the voluntary sector cannot become a parallel provider of education and the applicability of their models in the Government system is essential for sustainability.

The Government is yet to recognize NGOs as credible and full-fledged partners for elementary education. The collaboration extended to NGOs is mostly confined to certain segments of the education system, notably to deal with the hard-to-reach target groups. NGOs have rarely been approached for a larger consultative role in the national agenda for elementary education. The collaboration is weighted in favour of the Government. The NGOs surveyed, despite having achieved considerable national credibility, continued to be susceptible to the vagaries of Governmental policies and directives. The NGOs had to often endure sudden shifts in policies, undoing several years of fruitful collaboration.

The NGOs surveyed, on their part, had not developed their own vision and strategies for a larger role in the future. With social mobilization as the main thrust, quality of education had not been given due consideration as the work of some of the NGOs expanded. In general, the survey found that none of the NGOs had used ongoing, regular external evaluation as a tool to assess the effectiveness of their interventions and to improve their impact in the future. There is a lack of adequate documentation on the development and evolution of the work of the NGOs surveyed. The NGOs had also not paid sufficient attention to human resource development as an important requirement for an expanded role.

### *III.1. Comparative Advantage of NGOs in Large Programs*

#### III.1.1 Micro perspectives

The survey demonstrates that NGOs bring value to the implementation of large-scale programs through their innovations at the micro level. While macro programs of reform implemented by the Government address a large number of issues regarding educational deprivation, NGOs bring lessons of effective local action. The NGOs surveyed predominantly act as catalytic agents and not as large scale service providers. If they run schools, they are on a small scale and with the motive of experimentation. Bodh Shiksha Samiti runs 7 community schools in the slums of Jaipur and does not intend to expand the numbers. Instead, it will add higher classes to take the experimentation forward to upper primary classes. Rishi Valley is directly associated with 16 satellite schools, and will not be

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opening any more. Pratham hopes to hand over the 3000 balwadis to the Municipal Corporation of Mumbai. MVF and CEMD do not run schools of their own. The strength of the NGOs is derived from intensive and focused action and these experiences have been brought to Government programs.

### III.1.2. Access to education for the hard-to-reach children

Full access to primary education still remains a very daunting prospect in India. Around 35 million children, one third of the school-going population, are outside the purview of schooling. In the year 2000, an estimated 39 m children in the age group of 6-11 years and an additional 7.28 m children outside the age group will need to be brought into schools for Universal Primary Education. The NGOs surveyed have made schooling possible for many of the unreached out of school children who have been left out of the Government schooling system. MVF has made significant breakthroughs in getting bonded child labourers into schools, including adolescent never-been-to-school girls. Bodh and Pratham have provided schooling for slum dwellers. Rishi Valley started its work with children in remote hamlets without easy access to schooling.

The problem of out of school children has usually been linked to a lack of demand for schooling. The NGOs surveyed have established that enhancing access to schooling is constrained more by a lack of *good quality supply* than lack of demand. The NGO experiences reveal that there is a strong latent demand for education even among the poorest communities, and that poverty as a causal factor for low educational participation can be overcome with a responsive education system. MVF's communities not only withdrew their children from work, they also contributed in cash and kind to their childrens' schooling. Pratham found that even really poor parents such as pavement dwellers sent their children to school. CEMD's work with Muslim schools has shown that education is seen as a means of social mobility. A survey of 4 educationally backward States of India[13] revealed that 98% of parents wanted education for their boys and 87% wanted education for their girls. Thus, while social mobilization can increase enrolments, the challenge is to retain children in school by making it interesting and worthwhile. The NGOs surveyed hold the view that financial incentives are really not required for improving enrolments and retention.

### III.1.3 School based quality improvements

The NGOs surveyed have worked to bring quality improvements at the school level. Their interventions have focused on the school as the unit for reform and change. NGOs have expanded the scope of quality improvements within the school. The NGO sector has developed and implemented incipient concepts such as multi-grade, multi-level teaching, child-centred teaching-learning processes, and cognitive and non-cognitive attributes in children and integrated learning (across subjects). The NGOs surveyed have taken many of these quality improvement concepts forward, and notably found ways and means by which academic and administrative reforms can reinforce each other. Their interventions have led to a greater understanding of how the quality of classroom processes can be enhanced, with the school as a responsible and responsive entity, combining academic, financial and management improvements.

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[13] Public Report on Basic Education in India. Oxford University Press, 1999.

Quality in school education is defined by the NGOs surveyed in a much broader context than just learning outcomes of children. Bodh views education as a socialization process. The school is a place where children from deprived communities find means of self-expression and interact with each other and with society with dignity. Quality of learning denotes acquisition of both cognitive and non-cognitive skills. Eklavya's approach is to nurture the spirit of enquiry in the child rather than rote learning. CEMD found that greater management efficiency leads to greater instructional quality.

The management of curriculum and pedagogy by the NGOs varies from the mainstream Government system. In the primary classes, the NGOs surveyed have followed a multi-grade, multi-level approach to teaching as opposed to a strict progression in Grades as in Government schools. Children are expected to acquire certain competencies when they pass out of class V. Bodh and Rishi Valley have followed a multi-grade and multi-level model[14]. Within the camps and bridge courses, MVF defines pedagogy in the context of instilling an attitude to learning in first-generation learners. The bridge courses prepare children to graduate to formal classrooms. Bodh's resources are concentrated on providing a supportive and joyful atmosphere for deprived children. Eklavya has used integrated curriculum for classes I-V but, as its intervention is within Government schools, the existing Grade structure has been followed. Multi-grade and multi-level teaching and transaction of an integrated curriculum (across subjects) are found to be effective in building children's abilities. Multi-level grouping of children of different ages is considered to be not only a valuable educational tool but also as an opportunity for children to acquire emotional intelligence. Rishi Valley has found cooperative learning useful in integrating children with learning disabilities.

The survey highlighted the need for extensive support systems for introducing and maintaining quality improvements at the school level. Teachers, especially in remote areas, tend to be isolated, and require effective support systems within and close to the school. The RVREC established decentralized resource centres for academic support clusters of schools in its program with 2000 tribal schools in Paderu, Andhra Pradesh. Bodh provides intensive and school-based inputs to teachers. Eklavya has demonstrated that it is essential to provide regular on-site supervision and support to teachers. For effective teaching-learning, timely availability of textbooks and provision of teaching aides, supplementaries and work books for children are needed. Pratham's 23 resource centres in each of the wards of Mumbai provide support to the running of balwadis. The survey highlighted the importance of management support at the school level for quality improvements to be implemented and evaluated. CEMD has shown that school Headmasters and Principals are an extremely important constituency bearing an influence on quality improvement initiatives. For proper support to teachers, administrators and headmasters also need to be sensitized and trained.

Although the NGOs had introduced new concepts of quality and monitored their interventions, qualitative methods of evaluating children's competencies had not yet gained sufficient ground. The NGOs have not yet developed alternative standards and tools for evaluation of quality in learning. Evaluation of student achievement continues to be

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[14] Multi-level classes group children not just across grades but by ability levels within and across grades. Multi-level groups allow children to follow their own pace of learning, and encourage cooperative and child-to-child learning.



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measured through testing for Minimum Levels of Learning[15]. Although the NGOs attempted to adhere to the Government-prescribed Minimum Levels of Learning (MLL) in Grade V in order to enable the students to make a transition to the upper classes, the MLL tool was found to be ineffective in capturing all the dimensions of children's learning. Bodh has made some beginnings in assessing children's cognitive attainment and non-cognitive attainment, as opposed to just scholastic achievement. A study of children's cognitive development[16] was conducted with a sample of school children, before and after Bodh's intervention. The study aimed not only to assess the levels of children's cognitive attainment, but also used alternative assessment procedures to understand how children's capacities to think, query, learn, express and create are developed.

**III.1.4. Building school-community link**

All the NGOs surveyed viewed community participation as an extremely valuable contributor to increase the quality of school education. Participation of parents in school management increases the accountability of schools and attendance rates of teachers and children. The school-community link is considered indispensable and pursued as a central strategy by all the NGOs surveyed.

Bodh, Rishi Valley and Pratham have set up schools based on community demand. The communities are not only involved in discussions on the running of schools, holidays, etc, but also on curriculum issues. One of CEMD's principal aims has been to reduce the distance between the schools and the communities. Even Eklavya, which had hitherto worked within the schools without much direct contact with the communities, has begun to dialogue with parents on curriculum issues. MVF has built an impressive group of stakeholders for education - they include not only parents and their children, but also elected Panchayat representatives, former child labour employers and Government school teachers. Former employers of child labour were sensitized to put up boards to declare their work place child labour-free and to sponsor children to go to school.

The value of community participation is increasingly recognized by the Government. Communities and youth have been the backbone of the Total Literacy Campaigns. Wherever the Government took the initiative to establish a dialogue with the community, there was a strong response in favour of primary education. This is true of the Janmabhoomi program in Andhra Pradesh and the Lok Sampark Abhiyan initiative in Madhya Pradesh, both of which are Government initiatives for mass people contact.

Youth groups have been a potent force in the work of all the NGOs. Pratham's young balwadi instructors function not only as teachers, but also as community mobilizers and community leaders. Rishi Valley, Bodh and Eklavya use young volunteers and teachers. 10,000 youth volunteers support MVF's cause for child labour elimination, and have

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15 Minimum Levels of Learning At Primary Stage, the National Council for Education Research and Training, 1991. This established national criteria to evaluate pupil achievements. MLL is now seen as a major strategy for improvement in the quality of primary education and defines learning competencies for various subjects. Curriculum and textbooks are being geared to meet MLLs. Most States in India have adopted MLLs.

16 Bodh Shiksha Samiti. Cognitive Attainment : A Glimpse of Process, 1996. Cognitive Attainment and Process : A Comparative Analysis, 1999.



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facilitated initial awareness building in the villages. All the NGOs have worked with women's groups to further their goals and objectives. Women have proved to be very credible partners in the cause of education, which stands further reiterated by the work of the NGOs. MVF has worked with DWCRA groups, Mahila Sanghams and other women's groups. Bodh has worked with Kishori Samoohs (adolescent girls' groups) and mahila samoohs (women's groups) and has encouraged mother teachers to take care of pre-school classes. Pratham expects to hand over the management of its balwadis to Mahila Mandals. Involving mothers as mobilizers has had a very salutary effect on the schooling of children. Village Education Committees have been strengthened by the participation of women. During the past one year, MVF has built strong links with Government teachers.

The NGOs opine that community resources for primary education lie largely unexploited by the Government[17]. The NGOs surveyed have mobilized significant financial and human resources from communities. This has been borne out in both rural and urban settings. The Parent Teacher Associations (PTAs) have contributed funds for teacher salaries, school buildings, furniture, etc. When a strong demand for schooling built up, the communities did not wait for the Government to provide infrastructure support. They have come forward to pay teacher salaries and to expand school buildings. MVF experimented with providing a lump sum of Rs 5000-50,000 to 126 SECs in 9 mandals, with very positive results on the whole (only 3 villages misused these funds). PTAs have become so strong and articulate in MVF villages in Andhra Pradesh that they have been able to put pressure on the Government for teachers and facilities. Some of them have acquired equal control on school funds and have started to demand school inspection rights. While these have caused occasional friction, there emerged sure signs of community empowerment and changing accountability of the school system.

The Panchayati Raj institutions have a vital role to play in improving education. In Andhra Pradesh, many PTAs have the village Sarpanch as the President. Gram (village) Panchayats have played a larger role of supervising the PTAs in the MVF villages in Andhra Pradesh. MVF, on a trial basis, delegated the implementation of their activities to PTAs in 10 villages. Joint accounts were opened for the PTA President and the school headmaster for management of school funds and disbursement of community teacher salaries. The Gram Panchayat reviewed the program regularly and thereby the schools became accountable to them. In turn, the Gram Panchayat took up school issues, facilities improvement and other problems at the mandal and district levels and helped to raise additional resources through other avenues such as the Jawahar Rozgar Yojana. In Madhya Pradesh where Eklavya operates, the Panchayats have actively taken over many of the responsibilities relating to school management, including recruiting and paying teachers.

### *III.2. Cost Effective Approaches to Educational Provision*

#### III.2.1. The voluntary teacher

[17] An exception to this is the Education Guarantee Scheme of the Government of Madhya Pradesh whereby the Government guaranteed to provide a schooling facility within 90 days to children in habitations that did not have a school within 1 km. The demand for the school had to come from the community who had to contribute to the setting up of the school. The Government provided educational materials and an honorarium to a "guruji" who was recruited from the community itself to act as a teacher. In the two years that the scheme has been in operation, over 25000 EGS centres have been established in Madhya Pradesh with community support.

The NGOs pioneered the concept of the "voluntary teacher", essentially to counter teacher absenteeism and to bring in local accountability. The strategy was to recruit under-qualified youth from the community, provide training and to use them as teachers in remote, rural schools that suffered from high teacher absenteeism. The NGO teachers developed a certain identity – young, educated up to Class X, and belonging to the same village or hamlet in which they are expected to teach. They gained recognition and social strength from working as teachers. They were paid an honorarium substantially lower than the salary of a qualified Government teacher. Coming from the same community, the voluntary teachers had the motivation and interest to make a difference in their village and as a result had a significant impact on student enrolment and retention. The NGOs surveyed have used different types of voluntary teachers, who are at the centre of innovations and new practices. MVF's voluntary teachers, Pratham's balwadi instructors, teachers of Rishi Valley, all fall into this category. Although Eklavya has worked with Government teachers, it has brought in youth volunteers to provide training and on-site professional support to teachers.

The concept of the voluntary teacher has proliferated within the Government mainly as a cost saving expedient. While retaining the low remuneration aspect, the Government changed other aspects including, in some cases, the need to draw teachers locally (for e.g., the Shiksha Karmis in Madhya Pradesh). The attraction of this model for the Government is easy to see. There is a real dilemma with regard to teacher numbers – on the one hand, there is a growing need for additional teachers and on the other, already 90-95% of education budgets go towards meeting salaries in India. The availability of adequate numbers of teachers is a major issue in the country, with consequences for the teacher-pupil ratio (TPR). Most NGOs have found 1:30-35 as the appropriate teacher-pupil ratio. However, even the Government norm of 1:40 rarely obtains in most Indian schools. There are large teacher vacancies in Ranga Reddy district where MVF is working. MVF has provided 635 volunteer teachers to work in Government schools to cope with the increase in enrolment Despite these, the TPR continues to be adverse. In Kothapally village in Andhra Pradesh, there is one teacher for a student population of 347, and MVF has provided 5 volunteer teachers. In Janwada village, there are 2 Government teachers for 900 children and MVF has stepped in with 11 teachers.

Variants to the voluntary teacher concept have emerged with several States adopting different types of models. The Shiksha Karmis in Madhya Pradesh are employed for 1-3 years, the National Child Labour Eradication Project teachers for 3 years, DPEP para teachers for 5 years and the Education Guarantee Scheme Gurujis for 3 years. Some para teachers have employment status similar to the regular teachers. Others receive honoraria as low as Rs 500 (as compared to an entry level salary of Rs 6000-8000 for a Government teacher). As salary differentials continued, there have been several litigations from voluntary teachers for "equal pay for equal work". Although voluntary teachers have acquired new pedagogic principles and practices, they are limited in terms of core academic competencies. Enlightened PTAs in Andhra Pradesh had begun to request "qualified maths and science teachers" in place of para teachers. The para teachers are put through assorted training programs. While some of them (e.g., the Gurujis of the Education Guarantee Scheme) receive the same in-service training as regular Government teachers, others receive specially designed training programs.

As a result of the entry of voluntary teachers in Government schools, the community of teachers at the primary school level has undergone a major transformation. Neither the NGOs nor the Government has paid much attention to a future strategy for the effective assimilation

of para teachers in the system. The NGO community does not have a uniform view. MVF has attempted to have their volunteer teachers absorbed by the Government system and encourages them to upgrade their skills over a period of time. Rishi Valley is facilitating its voluntary teachers to enhance their qualifications through Open University courses. Pratham has similar plans. Another NGO (outside the survey) has the view that voluntary teachers should only be considered activists and should hand over their work to regular teachers, which the Government must provide.

While the recruitment of para teachers has definitely alleviated the short term problems of teacher numbers, there is clearly a lack of future vision in this direction. This has assumed a critical dimension given the large numbers of para teachers that have been appointed. Madhya Pradesh, and more recently Uttar Pradesh, (two large States) have stopped recruiting regular Government teachers and are only appointing para teachers. The Government of Andhra Pradesh has appointed 55000 volunteer teachers. The trend of growing numbers of voluntary teachers of several kinds is indeed one of concern when not accompanied by a clearly formulated policy on the future of such teachers in terms of their administrative management, academic training, remuneration and equivalence with regular teachers.

**III.2.2. Teacher Training**

All the NGOs surveyed have developed intensive ways of working with teachers. Co-opting teachers as partners while undertaking any new methodology in teaching/learning or curriculum development is considered essential and each NGO has its own training model. MVF has a training facility at Chevella mandal in Ranga Reddy district where its volunteer teachers and camp teachers are trained by a resource team of trainers. The resource team also moves about to the camps and schools to provide on-site professional support and monitoring. Teachers receive training to be activists, to run bridge courses and to be day-school teachers. Apart from its own teachers, MVF has also trained 17000 of the 25000 NFE instructors in Andhra Pradesh to be education activists. Pratham has an in-house training pool developed with support from colleges and institutions. (Department of Child Development, SNDT University, private teacher training colleges, Sadhana Education Society, Homi Bhabha Centre for Science Education, etc). Pratham's foray into teacher training has brought the realization that for effective transformation of teachers, activities close to their area of work is essential rather than a generic teacher training program.

As in the case of Pratham and MVF, Bodh packages teacher training, social mobilization and pedagogy together in an integrated fashion. Bodh's teacher training is very intensive and revolves around, firstly, making the teachers develop empathy for the slum children they are about to teach and then imparting methods of joyful teaching/learning. Bodh, apart from its 2-month training program and annual training camps, has also developed a 2-year teacher training program for which it is seeking recognition.

Eklavya has developed an elaborate system of teacher training, on-site professional support to teachers, and monitoring and feedback. The approach has been to create groups of resource teachers who themselves take on the role of trainers. Peer group interaction among teachers from clusters of schools is fostered. The RVREC has a full-fledged teacher training facility at the Rishi Valley Institute of Educational Resources, set up with a grant from the Government of India. Each of the teachers at the satellite schools is a resource teacher to large scale programs that are replicating the RVREC model. The training facility also hosts a series of training programs for educators and administrators from all over the country. A lab

school within the campus enables the teachers to get hands-on training. RVREC routinely encourages teachers to be attached to the satellite schools for a while in order to comprehend the schooling process. The teacher training program has become a self-standing and financially viable activity of the RVREC.

The teacher training programs adopted by the NGOs surveyed differ significantly from those offered through the Government system in both style and duration. The NGOs have demonstrated that in-service teacher training is crucial to bring quality improvements. Practice teaching is much more important than lectures. Observation oriented and reflective practices are the hallmark of the NGO teacher training programs. Teacher training by the NGOs surveyed indicate that the "cascade model" of teacher training by the Government is not very effective. Governmental training is usually confined to pedagogy. NGO teachers, on the other hand, are trained to become successful activists, social mobilizers and change agents apart from gaining competence in pedagogy and classroom processes. On-site professional support and continued academic follow-up with teachers are crucial strategies used by all the NGOs for effective implementation of new pedagogic practices. This is a major departure from the norm for Government teachers, who receive practically no in-service training, and when it is provided, it is mainly by way of lectures, away from the school environment, with very little practical demonstration[18]. While the NGOs surveyed used teachers to perform larger community mobilization roles, the Government used teachers as the lowest official functionary by giving them all kinds of non-teaching, administrative tasks[19].

The teacher training models evolved by the NGOs had not had a significant impact on mainstream teacher training institutions. While the NGOs had been requisitioned frequently for conducting training programs, there had been no attempts to formally incorporate their models within training institutions such as the District Institutes of Education and Training (DIETs)[20]. The DIETs have by and large remained unconnected with innovations in primary education and have not been at the cutting-edge of training and support to the teaching community. The DPEP has enabled the creation of Resource Centres at block and cluster levels, which the NGOs found useful to interact with. However, the DIETs did not have strong professional linkages with these institutions in the field. The MV Foundation had so far not worked with a DIET for transfer of its bridge course or the camp model. Bodh Shiksha Samiti, despite an intervention program in Municipal Schools, had not yet started collaborating with a DIET, although this was proposed for the future. Although Eklavya and CEMD had links with the SCERT, they had not yet developed links with DIETs. In fact, in Shahpur block in Madhya Pradesh, where Eklavya's curriculum materials are under trial, the DIET staff completely withdrew from providing back-up support and training. Rishi Valley had made some progress in this direction and had entered into a one-year Memorandum of Understanding with a DIET in Uttar Pradesh for capacity building and had developed links with the DIETs in Mysore and Kerala.

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[18] This scenario has changed in districts where the DPEP is being implemented. The DPEP districts have put in place an extensive system of decentralized in-service training to teachers through Block and Cluster Resource Centres. However, an effective on-site professional support system is still weak.

[19] In one of their surveys, Eklavya found that teachers were performing something like 83 different activities and were involved in surveys, data collection, election duties, immunization campaigns, etc.

[20] The DIETs started to be established in 1987-88 as part of the scheme to restructure and reorganize teacher education. So far 448 DIETs have been established all over the country through a centrally sponsored program of support.

### III.2.3. The Alternative to Formal Schooling

The non-formal education stream owes its existence to policy formulations in the National Policy on Education of 1986, which stated that a large and systematic program of non-formal education will be launched for school drop-outs, for children from habitations without schools, working children and girls who cannot attend whole-day schools. This was inspired by the Jomtien Declaration that called for non-formal avenues for the out-of-school children. India, like other South Asian countries, put in place the non-formal education (NFE) program for deprived and out of school children. After reaching Grade V, the children were expected to move from NFE centres to formal schools.

NGOs have traditionally been associated with the non-formal stream of education. Currently 825 voluntary agencies are being funded by the Central Government to run NFE centres all over the country[21]. Both Central and State Governments fund NFE programs. NFE centres are run both by the Government and by voluntary agencies. Governmental funding for NGOs in the education sector has also been predominantly to run NFE centres. MVF, Bodh and Rishi Valley have worked with variations of the NFE model. A new program of support to Experimental and Innovative projects by the Central Government was introduced and 50 such projects have been supported, including the programs of the NGOs surveyed, Bodh, Rishi Valley and MV Foundation.

The NFE system in India has come under a lot of criticism. The most important one is that it has been singularly unsuccessful in providing a viable full-fledged education avenue for deprived children. There is almost no evidence of children from the NFE stream getting absorbed in regular formal schools. The NFE program also did not make any dent in reaching out to the disadvantaged. In Madhya Pradesh, only 15% (1589) of the NFE centres (total of 9848) were found to be located in villages which did not have a primary school[22]. By accepting that certain children cannot come to regular schools, the NFE program effectively dichotomized the provision of education for regular and under-privileged children. The NFE scheme has been running on the basis of poorly qualified and poorly paid instructors, working part-time with different textbooks, trying to compress five years of schooling into two.

The survey revealed that Rishi Valley, Bodh and MVF have extensive linkages with the non-formal or alternative schools. A new breed of 'non formal' schools have emerged under the label 'Alternative School' with voluntary, community teachers, now re-named 'para teachers'. While these approaches originated from the voluntary sector to make appropriate schooling available for remote and school-less habitations, the adoption of these models by the Government sector has been primarily as 'lower cost' options for universalizing primary education. Alternative Schools are being set up in great numbers especially through ongoing

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[21] Annual Report of the Department of Education, Ministry of Human Resource Development, 1998-99

[22] Jyotsna Jha : Education Guarantee Scheme and Alternative Schools – Community Based Initiatives in Primary Education in Madhya Pradesh, September 1998.

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programs of reform such as the DPEP. The DPEP has enabled the setting up of over 67000 Alternative Schools[23].

The "Alternative School" system (just like para teachers) suffers from a lack of clarity in official policy Statements. The large mass of Alternative School (AS) centres that have come up recently mask many variants which can be categorized into two broad types : (1) those that provide alternative *education*, using innovative and progressive pedagogy and providing an environment where children follow their own pace of learning; and (2) those that are set up as alternates or *substitutes* for the formal school (e.g., the Education Guarantee Scheme schools) in order to extend schooling facilities to remote, school-less habitations. While the latter are typical lower cost options to rapidly increase access, the former can often be more expensive than the formal school inasmuch as they require more intensive teacher training and use of teaching/learning materials.

The design of the current breed of AS has not benefited from an exercise to evaluate and learn from the experiences of the NFE program or to streamline Governmental support to these 'alternate' streams of education. The existing stock of poorly-functioning NFE centres has not yet been reformed or given a new orientation. The NGOs, while recognizing the urgency to expand schooling with low-cost methods in the face of constrained resources, held that there should no undermining of the formal school system and warned against the long term dilution of the State's financial responsibility for primary education.

### *III.3. The impact of NGOs on mainstream education*

All the NGOs surveyed have taken their model to scale, some more than others, having established its success. At one level, the activities of the NGOs themselves had expanded considerably and, on the other, Government and non-Government agencies adopted their models. The NGOs surveyed have influenced mainstream education in one way or another. The size of their impact in relation to the larger educational scenario may be small, as outlined in the Introduction, however, the mainstream interface is of a strategic kind. The pilot activities being implemented currently by the NGOs have the potential for large scale application. It is clear that in order to reach a stage of mass adaptation or replication, the NGOs need to build strategic institutional alliances. It is evident that the NGOs have already reached the limit of their managerial resources to support the implementation of their expanded activities and a further scaling up would require a different type of partnership with the larger education system.

While it cannot be claimed that the NGOs surveyed have managed to bring about large policy changes in elementary education, it can certainly be stated that most of them are able to have a 'policy dialogue' by virtue of their track record. The National Council for Education Research and Training (NCERT) acknowledged for the first time that the Grades system need not be followed rigidly. Minimum Levels of Learning are also sought to be re-defined and made more flexible. The NCERT invited consultations with NGOs in its initiative for revising the national curricular framework for the primary years[24]. There is now a greater recognition of the educational constraints for the disadvantaged.

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[23] These include Alternative School Centres, Education Guarantee Scheme Schools, Non Formal Education Centres and other special facilities such as Maktabs, Prehar Pathshalas, Sugar Schools, etc.

[24] National Council for Education Research and Training, National Curriculum Framework for School Education. A Discussion Document. January 2000.

The influence of the NGOs surveyed can be summarized as follows :

M.V. Foundation : Established the link between child labour eradication and universalization of elementary education. Brought a radical change in the NFE program in Andhra Pradesh. Strengthened the importance of formal schools to make special efforts to integrate working children. Pioneered the concept of the bridge course for integrating over-age out of school children. Member of the National Core Group for the Education of the Urban Poor.

Bodh Shiksha Samiti : Advocated a model of appropriate education for the urban deprived, by drawing attention to the size of the problem of the unschooled among the urban poor in Rajasthan. Coordinator of the National Core Group for the Education of the Urban Poor. Technical support agency to the UN System Education Initiative in Rajasthan. Member of the Resource Group of the National Council for Education Research and Training (NCERT) for the development of instructional materials for the primary years.

Pratham : Established a partnership with the Municipal Corporation of Mumbai on the importance of universal pre-school education as a gateway to universalizing primary education. Brought about recognition for remedial education in schools and bridge courses for out-of-school children. Built up of people's movement and an NGO Alliance for actualizing the 83rd Constitution Amendment Bill to make Elementary Education a fundamental right.

Rishi Valley Rural Education Program : Developed a generic multi-grade and multi-level education package for adaptation in different settings. Developed innovative curriculum and pioneered an education kit (School-in-a-Box) for multi-grade classes. Set up a teacher training institute. Strategic collaboration with a few District Institutes of Education Training.

Eklavya : Maintained a long-standing collaboration with the State Council of Education Research and Training (SCERT) in Madhya Pradesh for a State-wide revision of curriculum. Collaborates with the District Primary Education Program for piloting an integrated primary education package. Member of the Resource Group of the National Council for Education Research and Training (NCERT) for the development of instructional materials for the primary years.

CEMD : Collaborated with the Delhi Government and the Education Directorate for piloting school improvement programs and for preparing the education component of the 9th Plan Document. Collaborated with SCERT, Delhi for capacity building. Potential collaboration with the Central Institute of Education for designing a Principals' Training Program. Prospective collaboration with a State Institute of Education Management and Training to design and execute management training programs for school stakeholders.

### III.3.1. Quality control of NGO interventions

As the innovative approaches of the NGOs are scaled up in the mainstream education system, monitoring and quality assurance assumes crucial importance. All the NGOs surveyed reiterated the need for a strong monitoring and back-up system to ensure the success of pilot programs going to scale. In the case of the Rishi Valley model, it was found that the quality of implementation in 2000 tribal schools in Andhra Pradesh was superior to that of 30 Alternative Schools in Kerala, mainly due to the extensive and decentralized resource support system established for the former. NGOs also found peer sharing among teachers to



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be a powerful tool to sustain innovations. The NGOs held that for innovations to be scaled up, adequate resource-sharing systems need to be developed. This requires attention to communication methods, co-ordination and timely availability of information to the concerned partners.

There appeared to be an inevitable dilution in the model as it gets taken to scale. The Back to School Program that adopted the MVF model for getting child labourers to school, lacked the important community contact component. Bodh's model of community schools is sought to be replicated through the Government school network in Jaipur, with relaxation of several parameters, such as the student-teacher ratio, adoption of the Government-style cascade training model and relaxation of the requirement for daily community contact by teachers. CEMD's school improvement model moved away from intensive school-based inputs into sensitizing different levels of the education administration. The danger to watch out for is the complete dilution of the model. The Rishi Valley model perhaps has the greatest danger of dilution. It is clear that multi-grade and multi-level teaching can only succeed in certain conditions, in particular, small class-rooms, with appropriately qualified teachers, having access to suitable teaching-learning materials. The adoption of the multi-grade teaching model in order to address the problems of teacher shortage has an inherent danger of a complete dilution of the model, making it ineffective for large-scale application. The full substitution of textbooks with the education kit without appropriate teacher training or evaluation of its impact would reduce the instructional quality. Rishi Valley's education kit is now being tailored to different Grades (whereas earlier it was not graded) and to Government-prescribed Minimum Levels of Learning (earlier it only related to children's competencies). Thus, while the NGOs had acquired a fair amount of prominence as resource agencies to large programs, it was clear that more thinking was required on the adaptation of models in large settings. The onus has to be on the NGOs to ensure that their models do not get too diluted.

The NGOs surveyed appeared to be drawn into large-scale implementation of their models and were catering to several requests from the Government for training and technical support, especially in the context of DPEP, without sufficient thinking on their own vision for the future. This resulted in the key management personnel of the NGOs being called to support activities in several States. The NGOs had not yet begun to focus on their organizational development and on developing a core agenda for the future. Sufficient attention had not been paid to the development of internal human resources, technical and managerial, as the role of NGOs expanded with growing activities. There had been no systematic effort to "institutionalize" NGO interventions within Government systems. More importantly, the NGOs had not yet reflected on the possibilities of playing a larger strategic role in the future and the kind of partnership with the Government that such a role will call for.

## IV. CONCLUSIONS AND AREAS FOR ACTION

### *IV.1. Targeted Initiatives for Improving Access to Education*

The survey has highlighted the need for specially designed strategies and initiatives for children that are still out of school. The NGOs surveyed demonstrated that specific initiatives to address particular target groups, are required e.g., working children, street children, slum children, children of migrant families and tribal children. In order to accelerate the move towards UEE, it is necessary for the Government to take a strong stance



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on elementary education as a "child right". Designing appropriate access strategies is contingent upon the availability of data on the number and character of the unreached. Governmental and non-Governmental estimates vary, for instance on the number of child labourers, where non-Governmental estimates are more than double than those of the Government. For the urban uneducated, there is a problem of estimation of numbers as Government data collection does not extend to unrecognized colonies. Similarly, remote and school-less habitations and hamlets do not get covered in Government surveys. It is important to use the NGOs and other independent bodies to develop reliable estimates of the out of school children. The Government relies on NGOs to provide schooling to the 'hardest to reach'. However, as NGO mobilization brings an inflow of children into schools, the Government should back up their efforts by providing timely classroom space and teachers.

A strong policy thrust, combined with political will and resources are required to make elementary education universal. The National Policy on Education of 1986, updated in 1992, pre-dates the DPEP and many new initiatives within it. Although it was due for review after 5 years, the Policy has not been updated. New directions and commitments to realise the goal of UEE are required. Related policies with a bearing on education should also be reviewed in order to strengthen the commitment for schooling. An obvious case in point is the Child Labour Policy. Legislation to fight child labour only covers its incidence in hazardous industries and does not relate it to education. The Education Policy does not categorically stress that children should not work. The non-formal stream of education proposed for working children has not been successful in withdrawing them from work. The 83rd Constitution Amendment Bill to make elementary education a fundamental right has not yet been ratified. Pressure needs to be built up through civil society for its enactment. The full cycle of elementary education needs to be addressed, else all the investments in primary education will come to nought.

The survey also reinforced the link between quality and increased access and retention. All the NGOs (except CEMD) found that working with first generation learners requires special efforts in the earlier classes during which the schools need to provide a supportive and nurturing environment. The experiences of Bodh, Pratham, and MVF reinforce this stance. The schools, therefore, need to extend themselves especially in classes I-III to address drop-outs among first generation learners, for which teachers should be provided special orientation. MVF's bridge courses and Pratham's remedial classes can find much larger application in making schooling feasible for over-age new entrants and to curb drop-outs.

The fact that early childhood education plays a big part in UEE is well recognized and is also borne out by the NGOs surveyed. Pratham has worked predominantly on ECE as a gateway to UEE. Bodh offers both pre-school and primary school programs in the slum schools. Rishi Valley had to provide pre-school classes due to demand from the community and because the older children brought the younger ones along. This requires both an overall policy statement from the Government to link ECE with primary education, to encourage joint NGO and community investment in expanding ECE across the country and to emulate successful NGO experiments.

***IV.2. Quality Enhancement Measures***

There is a growing recognition of the importance of ensuring quality and contextuality in education to curb drop-outs and to increase enrolments. The NGO experiments show that school-based initiatives are required to improve the quality of education. The key agents of



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change that need enhanced professional support, training and motivation are the school stakeholders, mainly teachers, Principals and School Management Committees. The building up of academic support structures close to the school is of high importance

A strong and sustained investment in teachers and teacher education/training is a crucial area for action by the Government. Not only do teacher numbers need to grow, the quality of pre and in-service training needs to be improved substantially. An institutional reform in both pre and in-service teacher training is required. The State Councils for Education Research and Training (SCERTs) and the District Institutes of Training (DIETs) need to develop institution development plans to increase the professionalization of these institutes. There is a need for DIETs to establish direct links with NGO innovations and experiments. The range of teacher training models developed by NGOs should be evaluated for possible adaptation. The DIETs need to provide outreach services to Block Resource Centres (BRCs) and Cluster Resource Centres (CRCs) to develop an "educational referral" to take professional support right down to the village school. BRCs need the full complement of administrative, academic and managerial capacities. The NGOs can work very effectively with BRCs and CRCs to develop and implement programs that will turn them into professional academic resource institutions. Rishi Valley, Bodh and Eklavya are particularly well-equipped to play this role.

The use of a multi-grade teaching model has large implications for India. The VIth All India Educational Survey of 1993, showed that nearly 93% of rural Indian schools were functioning in a multi-grade situation in one way or another. India has the second largest number of multi-grade schools at the primary stage in the world after China. While the NGOs have looked at multi-grade models as effective pedagogic tools, the Government has adopted parts of the model mainly to deal with teacher shortages. A 1997 study of multi-grade classes[25] revealed that Government schools used management criteria, such as shortage of teachers, for multi-grade grouping, rather than educational criteria. A large scale application of MG models would require a national reform in textbooks and learning materials. Teacher training, both pre and in-service, need re-orientation to deal with teaching across Grades. Classroom management for appropriate seating of children in groups and activity-based teaching is required, which requires a higher investment in educational aids and kits. It is thus important to recognize the limitations and adaptability of MG, ML models. NGOs and the Government need to clearly evaluate the benefits and limitations of these models prior to large-scale implementation.

While NGOs have worked intensively in developing new teaching learning methodologies, there is a lack of appropriate learning assessment tools in line with innovations in pedagogy. The breaking down of Grades at primary stage requires thinking on alternate and flexible methods to track children's progress. Although various quality parameters have emerged, the only tested one is MLL. New concepts such as non-cognitive skills or development of positive attributes among children, emotional intelligence have emerged, which need qualitative studies to establish causal factors leading to improved learning. Joyful learning may have an intrinsic value but evidence on link to learning achievements is required. Studies are needed to document learning outcomes of children in various settings so that best practices in teaching/learning at the primary stage can be identified. This calls for tools and

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[25] Multi Grade Classrooms. Three case studies, Department of Pre School and Elementary Education, NCERT, 1997.



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methods for more broad-based student assessment. NGOs stress the need for school-based action research with teachers playing an important role.

There is a strong case for devolving downwards, management responsibilities for primary education, including financial powers. The Government needs to institute pilot programs for alternative management structures at the local levels, bringing in representatives of the Panchayati Raj Institutions (PRIs). This will require actions to strengthen and empower communities and elected representatives and making them accountable. Village Education Committees (VECs) need to be formed on democratic principles and representing the interests of all sections of the population. A study of 14 states showed that VECs were formed mainly through Government orders[26]. VECs did not have a statutory status except in 2 states. Limited structural interface was found between Gram Panchayats and VECs.

Professional institutions such as DIETs, BRCs and CRCs need to link up with people's organizations. This has become important in the wake of the Panchayati Raj Institutions (PRIs) acquiring the powers to appoint and supervise teachers. With teachers increasingly under the control of the Panchayats, the local elected bodies need to take an interest in ensuring a professional support system for training and monitoring for teachers.

### *IV.3. Alternative schools and para teachers*

The rapid expansion of Alternative Schools and para teachers are two enormously important macro trends which need a vision and a perspective plan. There has been a major proliferation of Alternative Schools, especially through the DPEP. To about 300000 schools that exist in the 164 DPEP districts, the program has only added 6000 new formal schools, with another 16000 planned until 2001. However, this pales in comparison with the planned expansion of Alternative Schools. By February 1999, 35000 AS had been set up and another 80000 more are proposed for the remaining period.

The Government's policy on non-formal and alternative schools needs a sharper ideological focus and practical strategies. The Government is investing significant resources in non-formal and alternative (education) schools, with innovative curriculum, enhanced teacher training, progressive pedagogy, etc, yet these schools are considered somewhat inferior to the formal schools – they receive less infrastructure support and teachers are less qualified. In addition, there is an ideological contradiction whereby the really deprived communities that benefit from such facilities are expected to contribute resources, whereas regular schools in better-off locations are entirely funded by the Government. The NGOs surveyed have shown that what is really needed is "non-formalization" of formal schools and making the education administration more flexible and responsive. Alternative schools require "formal" equivalence with regular schools. All the NGOs surveyed expressed concern that AS should not dilute the importance and role of existing formal schools in providing equitable and quality education. An important consideration is to review the status and performance of more than 2 lakh "old generation" NFE centres. The central budget for NFE in 1998-99 was Rs 300 crores. There is ample evidence of the poor state of the NFE stream. The recent PROBE survey found fewer than 10 functional NFE centres in 188 sample villages. Appropriate policy formulations and a thorough review of ongoing schemes should precede further mass replication of Alternative Schools.

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[26] Panchayati Raj Institutions and Village Education Committee Interface in DPEP. EdCil, TSG. Community Mobilization and VEC unit. 1999.



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The proliferation of para teachers poses a challenge to the system of teacher education and training. While para teachers acquire skills in new teaching methods and child-centred teaching, their professional growth is constrained due to their overall academic weakness. (Most para teachers have studied upto Grade X and many only upto Grade VIII). The lack of adequate core subject knowledge constrains further conceptual pedagogical renewal by these teachers. Para teachers require professional development opportunities, both in terms of technical provisions to qualify as regular teachers and service provisions for remuneration and promotions. Policies and strategies are required to address both teacher numbers and the quality of teacher training. While impressive strides have been made to improve and expand in-service training, particularly in DPEP districts, pre-service teacher education has been neglected so far. The existing pre-service training programs need more focus on teaching for primary classes. The BEd course is more oriented towards secondary school teaching.

An enhanced pre-service teacher education program in line with recent trends in pedagogical innovations is in order. NGOs can help in this and some of the NGOs can be obvious partners in designing improved teacher education programs. Rishi Valley, Eklavya and Bodh can be possible contributors. In addition, the Government could also facilitate a judicious opening up of teacher education to private providers. A rapid expansion and decentralization of pre-service teacher education providers is called for, on the same lines as in-service training.

### *IV.4. Scaling up NGO innovations*

The study aimed to look at the role played by the NGOs surveyed in scaling up and mainstreaming their innovative approaches or models within the larger educational scenario. Given the huge difference in the scale of operation of the NGOs and the scale at which the Government system operates, it is neither possible nor desirable to move directly from the micro to the macro. The NGOs surveyed were poised at the stage of having piloted their model in the mainstream, in a limited setting. For a large-scale adaptation, a new type of partnership is called for. Innovation at the meso level will help the NGOs to move from micro action to macro application. At this intermediate stage, it is crucial to create enabling structures and institutional capacity. The anchoring of NGO interventions within Government institutions while mainstreaming is critical to future sustainability. In the context of the NGOs surveyed, these institutions would be SCERTs, DIETs, BRCs, CRCs and State Institutes of Education Management and Training (SIEMATs - in the case of CEMD).

Implementation of any innovative model must provide scope for self-reflection and correction. Innovations need to be nurtured at both conceptual and operational levels, for which due human and financial resources should be provided. Different types of innovations and experiments need to be combined for greater effectiveness. For instance, curricular change and school improvement plans should also combine innovations in alternative management structures and community-based initiatives.

In scaling up their activities, NGOs need to work with a wider constituency within the Government system in order to avoid the vagaries of changing Government policies and top-level functionaries. The dynamics and limitations of the larger system in taking on intensive NGO models should be studied prior to large scale expansion. This needs to be done with as

many stakeholders in the Government system as possible, in order for these to become effective. Institutional focal points need to be addressed, along with capacity building, budgets and an enabling environment. As models go to scale, the NGOs need to relinquish personal control and ownership to identified agencies and concentrate on quality control.

Scaling up NGO actions should not mean that NGOs are drawn into large-scale implementation of their experimental models, but stay at the cutting-edge of further experimentation. It is crucial for NGOs to make appropriate investments in human resources to support such an involvement. All the NGOs surveyed needed to develop an internal organizational vision for this purpose.

### *IV.5. Enabling Environment for NGO partnerships*

#### IV.5.1. Sharing the Vision for UEE

It has become apparent that the Government needs to aggressively build partnerships to realise the goals of UEE. NGOs have mostly tended to operate with a limited scope and are detached from the overall macro picture of education reform. As India takes forward the agenda for universalising elementary education, sharing the vision and the means of achieving UEE with the voluntary sector assumes significance. The Government needs to recognize the role of NGOs as professional resource centres and to build a culture of collaboration and partnership. The NGOs, on their part, should strive towards acquiring a macro perspective and "buy into" the larger national picture for UEE.

Collaboration with NGOs is required at all levels and this should be facilitated with an enabling environment with requisite funds. A spirit of collaboration and partnership needs to be nurtured at district and sub-district levels with grass root organizations. Simple procedures and transparent monitoring are needed, as are appropriate mechanisms to support grassroots organizations. Different strategies and models, recognizing the particular strengths and characters of different NGOs, are required. While some NGOs lend themselves to strategic partnerships, others will provide a more limited service. NGOs could be small "moving" resource groups to assist at the field level, to catalyse innovations in schools and clusters; they could collaborate with key educational institutions of the Government for curriculum reform, training or improvement of education management; they could be professional centres for research and evaluation of micro activities; and they could perform social audits of the true impact and influence of Government programs. The NGOs surveyed have reached a threshold of scale and credibility and can be incorporated as policy partners. Long-term partnerships are required to ensure sustainability.

It is however clear that NGOs cannot be a panacea for all problems that beset primary education and the limitations of their work should be understood. While recognizing the strength of NGOs in reaching the really disadvantaged and educationally deprived groups of population, the Government should not altogether disassociate itself from extending support to these target groups. Supportive action from the Government is exceedingly important to sustain the work of the NGOs. The work of all the NGOs surveyed bears this out. As MVF mobilized communities and children and as large numbers of children did enrol themselves, the schools were ill-equipped to take these children on – Government response lagged in providing classroom space, teachers and a conducive and supportive environment in the schools to absorb and retain first generation learners. That the system can rise to the occasion has been demonstrated – when an NGO in Calcutta, Cini Asha, brought more children into



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schools, the Calcutta Municipal Corporation started to run double shifts in schools. The Municipal Corporation of Mumbai is not yet ready to take over the 3000-odd balwadis that Pratham has set up. Apathy in Government schools also vitiates the future of good NGO work. For instance, children graduating from Bodh community schools to Government upper primary classes were often found to be returning to Bodh with complaints that lessons were not understood and teachers did not treat them well.

### IV.5.2. Capacity Building for NGOs

The NGOs surveyed are shaping up as professional resource agencies. The pattern of funding to NGOs needs to recognize and facilitate such a role. There is a case for the Government to consider infrastructure and capacity building support to a few key NGOs to enhance their professional competence. A good case in point is the Government support to Rishi Valley to set up a teacher training facility in their campus. The Rishi Valley Institute of Education Resources was set up with a grant from the Ministry of Human Resources Development, which now runs a self-sustaining program of training and orientation to various target groups. Capital investment for well-identified initiatives, particularly for human resource development could be facilitated by the Government. There is a strong case for identifying and building up capacities and infrastructure facilities in a few NGO organizations for pre-service and in-service teacher training. These can either be outreach centres of the DIETs, at the fore front of innovation and experimentation, or stand-alone centres with a clearly defined collaboration plan. These sort of formal links, based on partnerships can go a long way in enhancing the quality of education. NGOs also require exposure and exchanges with initiatives elsewhere, just as Government functionaries do. The NGOs should be provided opportunities and funds to share experiments and approaches nationally and internationally.

The NGOs, on their part, should recognize that professional development is the key to future growth. Documentation of different facets of NGO actions, their impact and future directions was significantly lacking with all the NGOs surveyed. The NGOs (Rishi Valley, Eklavya, Pratham and Bodh) did not have conclusive evidence on the impact of their interventions on learning achievements of students. Attention is needed on research and documentation, particularly action research, as an inherent component of ongoing activities. NGOs need to seriously take up process documentation and evaluation of interventions in the field. For this purpose the NGOs should draw upon resources in Government institutions and universities and "internalize" the process of continuous study and evaluation. External evaluation of the impact of NGO actions was significantly lacking with all the NGOs surveyed.

### IV.5.3. Networking

Given their limitations of size and scope, NGOs need to build networks among themselves for greater effectiveness. The importance of continuous advocacy and social audit cannot be overstated. The bigger NGOs should assume responsibility for co-opting smaller organizations as partners and should assist them in building their capacities to perform these roles. The NGOs need to build networks with others at all levels – National, State, District and below, not only for sharing and dissemination of experiences but also for potential joint action. The NGOs surveyed appeared to interact with other groups in two ways – firstly, to provide knowledge and skills through training to smaller NGOs and secondly, by sharing experiences with NGOs working in similar areas (e.g., Multi-grade classes). There was no evidence of NGOs coming together for advocacy or joint action.

Appropriate links with research institutions and universities as well as the private sector would also be useful for NGOs to continually upgrade their technical competencies. Collaboration with the former will be particularly useful for designing and implementing action research and evaluation studies. Bodh, Eklavya and Pratham had established some links for research and studies, however, further strengthening is in order.

The NGOs should seek to build a joint platform for effective dialogue with the Government to counteract the weak negotiating position that individual NGOs have in collaborating with the Government. Such a joint platform will also assist the NGOs to bring to bear the combined weight of their models and approaches on the larger elementary education scenario. Networking and concerted action with identified key partners will help the NGOs to move away from fragmented activities to collective advocacy and action. The initiative taken by Pratham to build up an NGO Alliance to play this role is a valuable step in the right direction.

**IV.5.4. External Agency Support**

External agencies have brought in tremendous resources for primary education in India during the last few years. A significant departure from the past is that external support has moved from project-specific funding to a macro reform template. The external support to the DPEP is unprecedented – it is the first time that several agencies have pledged such large resources to a single program of reform and have agreed to act in concert for the monitoring and review of its activities. On the Government's side, a considerable part of the education administration at the Central, State and district levels has been geared up to implement the program. With positive evidence of the DPEP having brought primary education to national attention, it is anticipated that there would be a new generation of investments for elementary education in the country in the near future.

There can be no disagreement that a large reform program must be negotiated with due representation from civil society. It is also equally important to consult with lower levels of Government. Not only the Federal Government but provincial Governments and local elected bodies should also be involved in a systematic consultative process that builds up to a macro program. The external agencies should facilitate a joint vision-building exercise with the voluntary sector. Given the inherently superior strength of the Government, a special dialogue space will need to be created where NGOs of different kinds are able to bring forth the aspirations of the disadvantaged.

A large program in education should provide a special fund for targeted and focused NGO actions, essentially to experiment with innovative approaches. As innovations mature, the replication and mainstreaming could be funded through regular budgets. The creation of a separate fund for NGO action by external agencies will go a long way in helping to establish GO-NGO partnerships, on principles of equality. The agencies should strive to co-opt a few identified NGOs in the preparation and setting up of the program. In order to establish a workable mechanism to identify and select appropriate NGOs to collaborate in the program, an NGO Consultative Group, represented by a cross-section of experts, will be useful. NGOs will be effective not only in translating the vision and plan for UEE downward to the beneficiaries, but also in providing "people's feedback" on the implementation of Government programs.

Capacity building plans must incorporate NGOs. As discussed in previous sections, NGOs need assistance in honing professional capacities. NGO resources should be drawn upon by external agencies for technical backstopping and monitoring. There have been instances of NGOs forming part of Technical Support Groups, which need to be further supported, mainly in a way that protects ongoing collaborative endeavours from the vagaries of official policy. As NGOs are assigned increasingly larger roles, an accountability framework for NGO action, which balances the need for NGO autonomy with responsibility towards the Government, needs to be built. NGO personnel should be called upon for reviews and supervision. Research, documentation, evaluation and social audits by NGOs should be built into the external agency programs. NGOs could play a very valuable role in intensive monitoring of processes at school and classroom levels. While national Management Information Systems (MIS) of large sector programs tend to be extensive and all-encompassing, the NGOs could be valuable in carrying out qualitative studies at the school level on a sample basis. Their work could give rise to the development of qualitative indicators to evaluate progress towards established goals for improving the quality of elementary education.

Finally, the voluntary sector is best placed to be a conscience-keeper for Government programs on the one hand and to be the voice of the disadvantaged on the other. While it is fruitful to engage NGO resources to complement Government programs, a certain section of the voluntary sector needs to remain independent to perform this role.

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